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IN TWO MOODS

IN TWO MOODS

[Aeneas]

✓ In bad society

By ✓ Vladimir

Karolenko

Translated

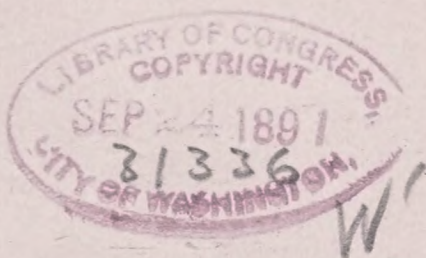
BY

STEPNIAK AND WM. WESTALL

AUTHORS OF

"THE BLIND MUSICIAN"

(Sandy)



NEW YORK

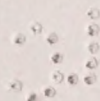
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(1891)

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INTRODUCTION.

ENCOURAGED by the praises bestowed on *The Blind Musician*, by the press, and the popularity it has achieved with the public, we have rendered into English two more of Kerolenko's stories—*In Two Moods* and *In Bad Society*, both of which are included in the present volume.

The latter, a delightful little tale of childish joys and sorrows, strange scenes and queer characters, speaks for itself and requires no comment from us.

But the other, *In Two Moods*, demands a few words of explanation—for being in some sense a fragment it is not necessarily self-explanatory, as complete works of art naturally are. Moreover, as the circumstances in which the story was written and published, required on the part of the author considerable reticence and many veiled allusions, the reader must in many instances read between the lines.

In Two Moods, like Turguenev's *Virgin Soil*, deals with young revolutionary Russia, struggling through darkness towards freedom and light.

The characters being taken almost exclusively from the student class, English readers may imagine that political struggle in Russia is carried on by children. This is not so. Russian youth are almost abnormally versatile and precocious, and the active life of thought and feeling begins with them at a much earlier age than with the youth of England and other European countries, and it is in Russian high schools that this activity finds its most earnest expression. This is a historic fact, and we mention it here only lest the reader may deem Gavrik's psychologic meditations as being too deep and complicated and his views of life too broad for a young man of twenty.

Gavrik is a typical young Russian of 1873-5, a period which marked the beginning of militant Nihilism. The story as a whole is concerned with the revolutionary movement. Urmánov is a decided revolutionist. "The Samoyedes" are Russians thinly disguised, to hoodwink the censorship. The meeting at the villa, so vividly described in the second part of the story, is a revolutionary meeting, as revolution goes in Russia. The pam-

phlet on the great debt owing by the educated and the rich to the poor and ignorant, read at the meeting, could not be other than the well-known *Historical Letter* of the notorious Peter Lavroff, who for many years was the recognized chief of the Russian refugees in Paris. The final resolution which many of the students adopt, and is accepted in the end by the pure-hearted, high-minded girl Tonia, the lovable heroine of the sketch, is nothing less than "to go" among the people as preachers of socialism. The "group" to which Gavrik belonged, and which is several times mentioned in the course of the story, is engaged in an "actual conspiracy against existing institutions" to cite the usual official description. To Russians this is so obvious that all who run may read. Thus we have in Kerolenko's narrative the nucleus of a Nihilist novel which, however, it is not likely that he will ever be allowed to complete. Yet with that power of concentration and capacity for expression of which born artists only have the secret, he has said much within the short space measured out to him. No other writer has described so vividly and picturesquely, and with such convincing fidelity that idealistic generation, who "lived on arguments, fell in love over argu-

ments, suffered and rejoiced in a cloud of arguments," and who believed that they should live to see the "bright future, the full new life" of which they dreamt.

In this story Kerolenko has graphically portrayed the Russian youth of the period in question. Some of the characters are remarkably well drawn. Tonia, Titus, the Sokolovs are true to the life. But it is in the *tout ensemble*—the picture regarded as a whole—that Kerolenko's growing power is here shown at its best. The first part of *In Two Moods*, is a song of youth, love, enthusiasm and exuberant life dyeing rose-color everything which it touches. Few writers have done aught so brilliant, warm, and fresh, and there are bits of description, such as the evening walk by the lake shore which only an artist of poetic genius and consummate ability could achieve.

The second half of the story is of a different character. It abounds in psychologic analysis, and it is conceivable that certain readers may find some parts of it rather heavy. On the other hand, it is neither so heavy nor so dry—not so scientific in fact—as some parts of *The Blind Musician*. Still there is too much of it. Nevertheless we have not abbreviated *In Two Moods* as we abbreviated *The*

Blind Musician. Kerolenko is no longer a novice whose artistic individuality is without interest for his readers. He has been recognized as one of the new lights of Russian fiction, and it is right that his readers should know him as he is, and learn that though he has splendid gifts he is not free from faults.

S. STEPNIAK.

December 20, 1890.

IN TWO MOODS

I.

I Must begin with my boyish enthusiasms.

I was nineteen years old in those days, and a student at the Petrovsky Academy.

Of course, that is a good age to be at ; and then and early days of college life, and the academy out in the suburbs, by the lake, among the green parks ; the young college friends, and students' meetings, and work, and discussions ;—all this made it seem as if we were going to accomplish something—something quite grand and out of the common, which would make everybody happy—and that we ourselves should be perfectly happy ever afterwards.

Nothing less—happy ! I dreamt of great deeds, of struggle, of sacrifice ; but in strife, and action,

and struggle, even in sacrifice, there was ever the idea of happiness—bright, complete, all-pervading happiness.

And besides that, there was *she*.

At the time I speak of, however, *she* was away. She had gone to the Volga in the spring to serve as cashier on a steamboat.

Theoretically, steamer cashiers are always men—naturally. But that is a mere bit of red tape, and not only had she succeeded in obtaining the post; she had done much more—kept it for two summers. We all considered this a very important matter. There are plenty of cashiers in the world, yet none of them seemed to me to be doing anything worth doing: they just hand out tickets, and receive a wretched little salary. But of female cashiers—at least female steamer cashiers—there was only one, and her work seemed to me not work merely but a kind of mission. I was enraptured by the energy of this girl—still little more than a child—who by her strenuous courage and resolution had gained for herself the right of independent labor, and succeeded through all difficulties in keeping the place which she had won. On first making her acquaintance, I felt that I had found something which I had long been seeking in my vague day-

dreams, and there awakened within me quite a peculiar sensation which irradiated with its brightness all my other hopes and ecstasies. For the rest, I never breathed a word about love either to her or in my own mind.

She went away ; but I knew that, so soon as the navigation should stop for the winter, she would come back and stand again in a corner of the room at our students' meetings with her fair face, so expressive and full of life, thrown into strong relief by her dark dress. And again, her eyes would light up with childlike curiosity at our discussions, and flash with joyous approval when I happened to voice her own unspoken thought—and her cheeks would glow with the bright color brought from the health-giving Volga.

When she was present, whatever questions we discussed interested and enlivened me ; but even without her, life was very bright. We had just finished the practical part of the academy course, and were having a vacation before the lectures began. We spent our time amusing ourselves, reading and talking.

II.

I WELL remember the peculiar mood I was in at that time.

When I was a child, my greatest though forbidden delight was to go secretly into a wretched little shop and buy a sausage for three-half pence. Long afterwards, as a grown-up man, I hunted all the great provision shops in St. Petersburg for just such another sausage—one with the same flavor, but I never found what I sought. Sometimes, in the mingled odors of a sausage shop, I half recognized that particular smell, yet all the same I could not find it. That is quite natural: what I was really looking for were my childhood and the keen appetite of my infant years, and naturally I could not find them. If my simile seems to you too prosaic, change the sausage into an apple, or a peach, or anything you like. The fact remains the same. And this is why I mention it: every period of life has its own special flavor, the particular character

of which we do not notice at the time. But so soon as the present is become the past and has moved a little way off from us, these peculiar characteristics of life stand out clear and call us back to them ; whereupon we regret the past, and wonder how it was we took so little notice of the enchanted atmosphere while it was round us, and failed to enjoy it consciously and to the full.

A few years pass : once more the present becomes the past, and we see again that it too, in its turn, had its own beauty, its own peculiar flavor. But when, on looking backward, we feel nothing save weariness or disgust—that is sad indeed. It means that life has lost its savor.

However, all this is off the point. As I was saying—at that period of my life, everything I went through, everything I felt, everything my intellect or imagination grasped, received a particular hue.

I read a great deal and learned much. Perhaps my learning was somewhat one-sided ; in any case when I read those same authors over again now I find in them much which somehow escaped my notice then. On the other hand, passages which once appeared all important have faded into the general perspective and lost all character.

In every book I read, it was my habit to observe

several distinguishing points which sank into my mind and became part of my own recollections. Thus, in Bokel I noticed especially, among others, that passage where he suggests a reason for the slavery of Ireland. The Irish, he says, are not free because they live on potato broth, while their conquerors eat flesh meat.

That is quite true. In any case, it is as true as the other proposition, that if the Irish were to become free and shake off the yoke of the English lords, they would probably choose nourishing beef-steaks in preference to potato broth. But in those days it did not occur to me to look at the other side of the medal and seek for deeper reasons. I accepted Bokel's theory about meat and potatoes with all the warmth of a proselyte. His deductions were so simple, so clear; his lines seemed to be drawn so straight; first of all,—yes just that, first of all—a “fowl in the pot,” and meat instead of potato broth, and meat for everybody. And after that, all which threw a light on the veracities of life: truth, justice, beauty, liberty, and the serving of higher interests generally. . . . Certainly that is rather a lot for one life. . . . But there was so much time before me—a whole eternity.

Another favorite writer of mine was Vogt. His

portrait hung in my room, with the inscription : "Gegen Dummheit kämpfen Götter selbst vergebens." The accuracy and solidity of scientific thought affected me in the same way that beauty affects its adorers. I simply worshipped this destroyer of metaphysical prejudices, and in my eyes his device placed him on the pedestal of a Titan or demigod. The gods fought against stupidity in vain, but the great man fights not in vain. Poor great man ! I did not know that already he had been given the lie in the very metaphysics he so hated, and that stupidity had shown its power by creeping even into his own works.

"Thought is a secretion of the brain, as bile is of the liver." This seemed to me both new and brilliant. I saw in it the passionless proclamation of truth, and in my jealous proselytism was ready to follow it out to its logical conclusion. Yes, like bile—like all other secretions—and nevertheless, there was hardly a thing that I worshipped as I worshipped thought.

In those days we lived on arguments, fell in love over arguments, suffered and rejoiced in a cloud of arguments : our tragedies, the raptures and sorrows of rejected love, all these had their origin in "warring opinions." Evidently, history, for some

abstruse reason, needed a contentious generation.

But I will not weary you with a list of the Russian and foreign authors whom I loved and believed in at that time. You can form an idea of my intellectual condition from the two examples I have already given. I went to the lectures, though I did not care much about them, never missed a students' meeting, studied—in the strict sense of the word—little, but worked and read much.

III.

The holidays were coming to an end and the lectures would soon recommence. The chill of autumn was already in the air, the water of the lake grew dark and dull ; in the flower-beds the gardeners replace the early summer flowers with their successors of the fall. Here and there, a few leaves fading early, dropped from the trees, shining like gold against the background of shady avenues.

The fields had turned yellow, and the railway trains, passing within two versts of the academy, stood out clearer, and seemed to pass closer than in the summer. Mine was the last room in the top story of the "state," or students' lodgings, and part of the railroad was visible from my window. The trains would come out from behind the hills, then disappear, leaving only a white trail of steam floating above the horizon. Then the entire train would reappear further on, and I could see the tiny carriages, like toys, running along the line. I could

even distinguish the wheels, and the windows glittering in the sunset. Next, the white ribbon of steam would suddenly break as the train, after gliding under the bridge, disappeared in a deep cutting. The hoarse voice of it died away gradually, and with its last echoes faded the last rays of daylight.

Titus (the friend who shared my room) and I used then to leave the window, and, while waiting for the regulation tea-urn to boil, would lie down on our beds in the twilight and talk of heaven knows what, while the evening chill streamed in at our window from the fields.

It was a pleasant life.

Among my fellow-students at that time were several who afterwards won distinction in different pursuits. You are familiar with their names—names of gifted and honorable workers. And yet if in those days any one had raised for me, as the rhetoricians say, “the curtain of the future,” and shown them to me as they are now, I should have felt insulted;—it would have seemed so petty in comparison with what I expected. Indeed, I must confess that however high I placed, for instance, Vogt, Buchner, Sechen off, or Buckle, I felt at times that a certain trace of the old world lingered about

them still. But we were to develop into something quite special—altogether new and unexceptional people, such as never lived before. It seemed to me that there was a something in my soul, now latent, yet none the less plainly felt. And when it expanded! . . . Absurd, was it not? Nevertheless I was neither arrogant nor vain. I dreamt neither of wealth nor power, neither of distinction nor fame. I never thought myself a genius. I merely dreamt that in me and my fellow-students there existed, as it were, buds wherein lay hidden and ready to unfold and come forth, the bright, future, the *full* new life. . . .

At that time there was in the Academy a certain Urmánov. He was two terms ahead of me, and we were not particularly intimate. In spite of which, or perhaps because of it, he roused in me a peculiar, almost romantic interest. Urmánov was a native of the Arkhangelsk *toundra* (Arctic wastes). That is, he was born in the town of Arkhangelsk itself, in the family of a poor official engaged in the salt industry. But in my imagination his somewhat foreign, good-looking face was indissolubly associated with the idea of the *toundra*. A lowering sky—snow all round—wretched huts, smoke faintly curling above them—reindeer

cropping the scanty grass. The *toundra* sleeps—the people sleep—the reindeer sleep; and from the distance floats a hardly audible dreary song, full of hopeless grief. All the enchanted kingdom sleeps, until—well, just until Urmánov has finished studying at the academy. Then, armed with knowledge, gained in the lecture halls or otherwise, he will turn aside from all temptations of civilization, from the love of women (this unquestionably!)—overcome all the allurements of personal life, and return to his gloomy native land. Then at last it will be spring-time in the *toundra*, the songs will ring out clearer, the Samoyedes* will awaken from their sleep of centuries to the new life, to the struggle for their rights, for the downtrodden rights of man. The young generation of the Samoyedes will gather round Urmánov, and he will speak to them of their “glorious past” (taking for granted that Samoyedes, like other people, have a glorious past)—will teach them to unite with the best forces of other nations in a quest for the general good of humanity.

* The author, evidently meant his Urmánov to be a Revolutionist, a “Nihilist,” a Russian patriot in a word. The Samoyedes are put in simply to mislead the censorship.

All this, among other things, was depicted in a long poem, which I wrote during my first term. The poem left something to be desired in the matter of rhyme and measure ; nevertheless, when I read it to my chum and old school-fellow, Titus, even that extremely sedate and practical personage was enraptured and prophesied for me undying poetic fame. The poem closed with the following picture : “ The aurora borealis gleams faintly across the interminable plain, the snow glitters with reflected fire, the sledge-board creaks, the reindeers dash over the frozen waste ; a Samoyéd courier, with full comprehension of his mission, is bringing Urmánov’s exhortation to ‘ the great Samoyéd nation.’ ”

There—don’t laugh ! Youth always dreams ;—perhaps later on those dreams may become wiser, more practical ; but whether they will become better, honester—that I doubt.

IV.

URMANOV had a slightly turned-up nose and prominent cheek-bones. These features seemed to point to a strain of foreign blood. Otherwise, his face was rather handsome and interesting. He had fiery black eyes, glittering with animation, and long dark curls falling on his neck from under the broad-brimmed, high-crowned hat which he always wore, after the student fashion of the day. His figure was much too lithe for a Samoyéd's ; his movements were rapid, and I do not remember any one whose personal appearance presented so perfect an example of that peculiar grace, and even in its way elegance, peculiar to students. His dress was far from being fashionable—indeed it was rather shabby—his coat was very threadbare, and showed plentiful traces of laboratory work in the form of acid-made stains. Nevertheless, whatever sort of garments Urmánov might wear, they always suited his slender figure to perfection, and

every one could recognize him as a student at the first glance.

His face, as also his figure, reflected faithfully and with extraordinary mobility the shifting moods of his expansive and impressionable nature. At our students' meetings he would argue hotly, gesticulating frantically, sometimes raising his voice to a savage roar. It was, indeed, almost impossible to argue with Urmánov, and his antagonists generally found it expedient to leave him in possession of the battle-field, good-humoredly retreating before his attacks. For the rest, Urmánov always cooled down as quickly as he flared up, and in half-an-hour's time would be ready to take up arms in defence of the very comrade whom he had just accused of being false to his principles and a traitor to his cause. Latterly, however, he had grown more self-restrained, and was less ready to express his extreme opinions at our meetings : he became sadder and more thoughtful. Somebody or other remarked that Urmánov was lowering his tone because he had reached his last term, and scented afar off the final examination and the coming degree. As a rule, we did not find it particularly difficult to justify these accusations ; in fact, to speak the truth, they very often were justified.

The jump from the unconditional rejection of all compromises to the acceptance of the most complex, was generally made but too often at the first step from the academy into the world. I did not know whether, or how, Urmánov would make that step ; but I passionately denied so insulting a suggestion, feeling much more inclined to suppose that the consciousness of his approaching great mission to the Samoyedes had cast over Urmánov that shade of gravity and melancholy in which I contrived to see something grand and noble. What were our mutual help funds, our "students' protests," to him, when the "sorrow and anguish of centuries" were wafted to him from his "native toundra ?"

It turned out, however, that both Urmánov's antagonists and myself were equally at fault. The cause of his melancholy and his seriousness, as also of a certain indifference to our affairs and our differences, was both simpler and more emotional.

It was embodied in the small, slender and characteristic figure of a young woman, whom, though she was Russian born and bred, we had named "the American." None of the students knew her personally ; we were even ignorant of her name.

V.

BESIDES attempting the poem which I have already mentioned, I, like many other young men at my age, dreamt of writing a gigantic novel. All the persons in it were to be heroes and heroines of a type altogether exceptional, "new people," extraordinary characters. Several of these heroes floated vaguely in my imagination, and among them was always an American. The Yankees are a very clever race, and have a wonderful Constitution; nevertheless, a thorough-going Yankee who estimates everything by a monetary standard, and even says of himself, "I am worth so many dollars," most certainly would not do for one of the heroes of my novel. My American must be a Russian, aspiring to become an American.

At that time America attracted many people, and I knew of several cases of emigration. Of course, to become simply an American with dollars did not amount to much. But the mere fact of the venture—the fresh energy with which these young

men flung themselves into an unknown land, intoxicated by its freedom and the novelty of its social relations—this in itself was enough to attract and impress me.

I had not yet fully examined the results of even one of these ventures, and therefore, had no idea how my hero would act when he was settled in his adopted country. So far, I pictured him as a tall man, with a little beard cut in American fashion, wearing gold-rimmed spectacles, and with a cold, restrained smile, beneath which I could vaguely discern something very grave and significant.

Now, you can easily understand the interest that a live Russian American woman, both young and pretty, kindled in me and my fellow-students.

She appeared on our horizon while she was spending the summer at a villa in the neighborhood. The first time I saw her was in the park; she was walking arm-in-arm with her father, an old retired general. He was gray, bent, and rather deaf, and wore a huge green shade to protect his eyes from the sun. It seemed to cost him a great effort to lift up his big, drooping head. Yet, none the less, when I happened to pass before the old man as he sat resting on a seat, he always raised his head and stared at me with his faded eyes, even looking after me in a way which made me

feel uncomfortable. His lower jaw trembled as though he wanted to say something, and his eyes protruded as though he was making up his mind to stop me and reprove me sternly for being young, for being a student, for having "views," and probably not respecting generals as much as I ought to do.

This half-shattered figure appeared in the park all the summer through, accompanied by an old footman of most forbidding aspect, and gained a certain notoriety among the students. Somebody nicknamed him "General Ferapontyev," and the appellation stuck. Although, apparently, the name itself implied nothing insulting, it was always used with a certain suggestion of irony. It expressed the silent antagonism between the decrepit general and the heedless academic youth.

And now for some time there had appeared, walking arm-in-arm with General Ferapontyev, a pretty young woman. The very notoriety of the general, helped to whet our curiosity touching his fair companion. But apart from this circumstance, there was something in the young woman's face and figure which attracted our attention, and marked her out from the motley crowd of summer visitors.

VI.

I HAVE no gift for describing the detail of ladies' dress, but it has always seemed to me that every "fashion" has its peculiar expression. It is worth while to observe how the expression of faces themselves alters with a change in fashion. To bold, open faces with high foreheads and direct glances, bespeaking a desire for independence and contempt of generally accepted prejudices, succeeded low foreheads covered with fringes, and eyes with painted lids and a helplessly naïve, even foolish, gaze, with a look in them which suggested that they were begging for mercy. As for low cut bodices, and absurdly narrow dresses, I dare not affirm it positively, but I have heard from most trustworthy sources that many ladies tied cords round their legs under their gowns a little below the knee, in order that no full and free movement might disturb the general appearance of helpless innocence—yielding passively for better or worse—which their wearers affected.

Men of fashion at this time assumed conquering and insolent airs. The same low foreheads and protruding eyes ; shirt-collars wide open, showing the throat, and with turned-back points sticking up to the ears. With this went loose coats, hands in waistcoat pockets and a careless and swaggering gait. The general effect was that of an impudent coxcomb who has flung off all prejudices, cares for nobody, and gives no quarter.

Such was the outward expression of fashion in those days, and it was lucidly explained to me by a very native boarding-school girl. To some critical remark of mine on the question of dress, she replied, with the unconscious logic of a young girl of the period, "Why, how can you say that? Forward girls used to be the fashion, but now retiring ones are coming into vogue." On this I burst out laughing ; but I see now that it was a piece of fine observation.

The young lady who walked with General Ferapontyev had a way of her own about clothes, although she dressed well, and even richly. If she followed any fashion at all it was evidently not ours. Everything she wore was simple, elegant, and easy. Her little feet, in their high kid boots with broad low heels, showed freely beneath her

short skirt. I remember how firmly and evenly her heels struck the stone pavements and the steps of the garden stairs. Altogether, her walk was remarkable for a peculiar firmness and boldness which, in combination with her small figure, produced a very original impression.

The first time I succeeded in seeing her closely, I could not make up my mind whether she pleased me or not. I was walking with Urmánov along the principal avenue, when the General and the lady came towards us. As we met, Urmánov raised his hat. The old gentleman turned round, and his jaw trembled more than usual. The lady looked at us in perplexity, and the gaze of her large eyes, steady, cold and unabashed, so distracted my attention that I failed to observe the general character of her face.

"I suppose she did not recognize me," said Urmánov, somewhat confused. "I met her in Moscow, but there were a lot of people there. Do you like her?" he asked suddenly, with unexpected vivacity.

"Her face strikes me as cold. I don't like such cold faces," I replied.

"She's an American," said Urmanov half to himself, as if in defence of the lady, and glanced back.

American! That was quite another matter. Now her face appeared to me exquisite, and its cold expression quite becoming. It fully corresponded with the restrained and somewhat dim look with which my fancy had invested the half-American hero of my future novel.

"What is she doing here?" I asked.

"She is on a visit to her father. She's the daughter of that—Ferapontyev."

Ferapontyev's daughter! Who would have thought it of the old General? He has an American daughter then! For her sake I forgave the General his green shade, and his trembling jaw, and his forbidding looks. A general who has for daughter an American must needs be freer from old-fashioned prejudices than other generals.

But Urmánov instantly smashed the General's reputation, and this time finally.

"He is a fearful tyrant, this Ferapontyev," he remarked, kicking away a pebble in the road.

"Ah! then, what is she doing here? Why did she come from America?"

"Well, you see, . . . that is a whole history."

A shade passed over Urmánov's expressive face. I put it down to indignation against the old general.

"She went to America with the man she loved.

You understand . . . without a marriage ceremony. He set up some business in Boston. . . . What their purpose was—the deuce knows ! But that is not the question. At first they got on capitally—then some troubles—about business, I think. . . . Everything will be lost if she cannot get some money. Well, you must know, she has inherited a fortune—a good large one, too—from her mother. But old Ferapontyev contrived to get conditions put into the will : his daughter can only get the money with his consent, or in case of his death, or else . . . the brute ! when she shall contract a legal marriage in Russia ! ”

A few steps further on Urmánov shook hands with me—(he had to go to the Museum)—and remarked at parting :—

“So that’s the story. He,—the American, that is, can’t return and marry her. That’s what it comes to.”

VII.

THIS story made at first no particular impression on me. I did not think that the failure of a business was any very great misfortune, especially in America. It happens there so often! But this was merely a momentary feeling. Of course, it was not a mere business concern for the accumulation of dollars. Behind that, without doubt, was something else, just the something which the half-American of my imagination would hate if he had a business office in Boston. . . .

I now looked with hatred upon "that Ferapontyev" returning from his walk. So that was what he was—a conventional old parasite, eating away two young lives, demanding of his own daughter at once infidelity and a false oath! To me she seemed an enchanted princess in the power of an old ogre.

She was walking beside her father, with her usual calm look of dignity, as if conscious of her

own integrity and obviously without any idea of trying to act oppressed innocence. She ministered to the old man simply and easily, and he, on his part, received her attentions with an air of fastidious distrust. For the rest, one could sometimes see that the young woman found it difficult to walk slowly, restraining the natural vivacity of her movements ; a certain impatience showed through her reserve.

After she had accompanied her father back to the villa, she always came out again for a walk alone. It was then that I used to notice the sharp, hurried beat of her heels upon the stairs and pavement. The lithe figure seemed to fly along the paths, quivering all over, and moving her shoulders in a curious way, as if compressing a thousand separate efforts into that nervous step. She always took these walks in the dusk, and she would plunge resolutely into the dark avenues alone. On one of these occasions, unable to restrain my sympathetic interest in the little American lady, I yielded to my curiosity and followed her—of course at a respectful distance. She walked rapidly down the straight main avenue, and stood hesitating a moment by the pool, evidently undecided as to whither she should wend. Then, turning into a

sidepath she disappeared among the trees, in the direction of the grotto.

To follow her further would have been insolence; so I turned back; but this solitary walk by dark and lonely paths, late in the autumn evening, gave a finishing touch to the outline of the American which I had pictured in my mind. Everything about her was complete and harmonious, just as I had imagined a "heroine" to be, and it impressed me delightfully.

VIII.

THE lectures was not yet begun. Meanwhile the physical weariness caused by the practical work had gone off, and there were times when I did not know what to do with the glorious autumn, with my leisure, and with that vague, pleasant, yet exhausting sensation which continually sought new forms,—exciting and impelling me, I knew not whither.

At these moments I used to take a book and go to the railway station, to meet the evening passenger train.

The road to the station was perfectly straight and thickly set with double rows of larch-trees, planted along the sidewalks. From the distance the whole road looked like one unbroken green wall. After one had walked a few yards the academy, the state-buildings, the farm, and everything else were quite hidden by the trees. In either direction could be seen nothing but the narrow avenue, strewn with

small rubble stones, which in their turn were covered with the fast falling larch needles. Rays of sunlight played on the sand and among the greenery ; the thick, tufted boughs, touched here and there with autumn tints, like gold, kept up a soft, half-liquid murmur. Here I felt myself in complete solitude, and gave the rein to the vague sensations which unfolded themselves, free and untrammelled, in my heart. I cannot say, exactly, of what I used to think ; only all that was pleasant to think of and dream of at other times seemed here to unite in a melodious chorus of feeling,—youth, strength, bright views of life, and still brighter hopes ! The rays of light shimmer and play through the trees far and near, as silently as if they too were dreams. And it seems as though something or some one were passing in the far distance through the shifting lights and shadows.

Sometimes as I walked I read. Glancing through those books, even now, I identify at once the pages I read in the larch-avenue ; the same soft murmur and the same green checkered light and shadow seem to hover round them still.

One day when I went to the station I saw Urmánov there. He was standing on the platform, and looking towards Moscow. The railroad, a *P30*

double line, ran between bare embankments and was flanked with a row of tall telegraph poles. One could see the rails far off, always narrowing, till at the last they faded away in the distance ; and above them floated the peculiar smoke or mist, which shows the presence of a large and busy town, hidden behind rising ground.

“Can you see the train?” asked Urmánov ;
“your sight is better than mine.”

“No, I can’t see it.”

“What is that? Like . . .”

These long narrow vistas ending in a mist are very deceptive ; if you gaze into them with expectation, they begin to stir, and then, expanding, appear full of spots and take strange shapes. But as I was not in an expectant mood I answered indifferently :—

“That is the smoke and fog of Moscow. You seem to be expecting some one. . . .”

“No, I just . . . that is . . .”

He broke off in confusion, and instantly began talking of something else.

The conversation flagged, and I buried myself in my book. Urmánov looked continually along the line. At last, the train appeared, first as a dark speck in the quivering mist ; soon, the speck

vanished, reappeared, and began to grow. When the train drew quite near, the guard's hand came out at the side, waving a flag to the engine-driver. The locomotive drew up, rattling, screaming and roaring ; the tank passed us, then the luggage-van, then two or three carriages. Finally, the entire monster, filling up the space a minute before so quiet, quivered, stopped, jerked a little backwards—and out of it sprang the American lady.

She stopped short, and looked at us both in perplexity. I thought, at first, that she was going to come up to me, but Urmánov, with a movement of nervous haste, went suddenly up to her.

“ Mr. Urmánov ? ” she asked. “ Ah, it is you !—and I thought . . . ”

Then, lightly taking his arm, she led him into the sidewalk.

“ There then ! I am very glad. . . . You do not look such a hobble-de-hoy as you used to do . . . ” I heard her say laughing, as they continued their walk down the avenue.

The huge train, which had only stopped to cast out of its breast of wood and iron this daring little figure, moved on again heavily, groaning and shrieking. The last carriages passed me at full speed, the rails creaked and groaned, the platform quivered and shook.

When I, in my turn, reached the mound where the highroad began, Urmánov and the American were some way off. They were walking arm-in-arm and she was leaning towards him with singular gracefulness, yet somehow it seemed, not that he was leading her, but that this nervous little woman was carrying off the fiery young patriot. Sometimes she stopped short, speaking excitedly and raising her head to him. Then, he would stand still in confusion and ill at ease, and when she dashed abruptly on again he tried in vain to keep time with her quick short steps.

I somehow understood what it was all about. A fictitious marriage, no doubt. Probably she had raised the question in Moscow and been told of Urmánov, who, very likely had already declared himself willing to take a leading part in the proposed comedy. It was all so natural. This way out of the difficulty had come spontaneously into my head and into the heads of many of my fellow-students with whom I had discussed the subject. I was even a little envious of Urmánov. I remembered her momentary hesitation when she stood wondering to which of us to turn, and her evident joy when she saw that Urmánov was the one she sought. That was doubtless due to my

being so young and looking so boyish. Old Fera-pontyev would perhaps have laughed at so juvenile a bridegroom.

But it was a real pleasure to me to look at those two from the distance. Assuredly Urmánov was just the right person to walk arm-in-arm with my heroine. It was beautiful, it was excellent, and it delighted me greatly.

From that day forward Urmánov accompanied the American lady on her evening walks, and when he met her by day walking in the avenues with the General, he raised his hat respectfully. The General at first regarded his daughter dubiously, but after a time he began to return the young man's greetings. At length, as I sat one day on a bench in the main avenue, I saw her formally introducing Urmánov to her father. They were near the lake ; the water was as smooth as a mirror, and reflected the figure of the General with his eye-shade like an absurd silhouette—a caricature in black paper. Urmánov raised his hat and respectfully pressed the two extended fingers of the General's right hand, the lady meanwhile watching them both like a careful theatre-manager. As moreover the trees bent over on both sides, forming an exquisite frame, the picture seemed to me exceedingly charming

and poetic. As yet, I knew life only from books ; I merely read and dreamt. Now something was taking place before my eyes.

The further progress of the affair was rapid. Urmánov's tact and respectful manner evidently pleased the General. Soon they could be seen constantly together, playing at chess on the balcony of the villa or walking in the park. The General livened up, talked loudly in the avenues, laughed with an old man's abrupt laughter, and often clapped Urmánov on the shoulder.

"You are the sort I like," he would exclaim. "You ought to have been a soldier !"

The lady used occasionally to frown and pout. Urmánov played his part as gravely as if it had not been all make-believe.

The wedding took place in our church, in the presence of a few spectators. Several peasant women, some students in blouses and high boots, a few old fogies—acquaintances and cronies of the General—and a little group of groomsmen and witnesses, also a sprinkling of outsiders. We felt the kind of stillness peculiar to empty churches where every sound rings out distinctly, echoes in the corners, and clings somewhere high up among the arches. We could hear the whispering of the

old women and, occasionally, a sigh or a murmured remark.

The bride was too gorgeously dressed for so quiet a wedding ; her face was paler than usual, and rather too plainly expressed contemptuous impatience. Urmánov, who was dressed in black, was unnecessarily grave. On the other hand, the General was in the best of humors. He looked triumphantly at his old cronies, raised his head high and struck his stick heavily on the stone floor, fussing about and giving directions to everybody.

I stood leaning against the wall, careless and indifferent. The whole affair seemed to me commonplace and hardly worthy of notice. The priest went through the service gracefully, and with the customary unction. The deacon pursed his thick lips, rolling out a tremendous octave, with an air as if that were nothing to what he could do at a real grand wedding. The clerk scrambled through his part in a shuffling way.

I was carelessly watching the smoke of the curling incense, and my thoughts were wandering to other things : to the Volga, to the steamer that was passing somewhere between the hills, to the girl-cashier, when suddenly my ear caught a whispered conversation among a group of students.

"Indeed, I believe it is true."

"What?" asked another voice.

"Why, they say Urmánov is over head and ears in love with his bride! Just look how white he is."

I woke up. What was this? What was happening? What were they talking about?

The cloud of blue smoke, curling upward, streamed through a yellow ray of sunlight which shone in at the window. Through the smoke I could see the wedding wreath, trembling above Urmánov's head in the tired hand of the student who acted as groomsman. The priest joined the hands of bride and bridegroom, the echo of the deacon's octave died away somewhere high up under the arches, and a chorus of children's voices rang out in the choir.

The general tapped with his stick, and as he glanced gleefully round looking very like a turkey-cock, I thought him disgusting. What was there for him to be so pleased about, so proud of? He, who himself believed in the significance of the ceremony which had just been performed; and why did he force these two people into acting a lie?

I left the church, and at the door I looked back.

The newly wedded pair were being led round the lectern. The American bit her lip, and her gray eyes had a look of obstinate determination. Urmánov, pale and grave, walked beside her, stepping carefully, and looking dubiously at the bride's gorgeous dress, as if to tread upon it would be for him the most terrible of misfortunes.

IX.

TEN days passed. The students came back from the vacation, and the throng of summer visitors began to diminish. The General fell ill and discontinued his walks in the park. The newly married pair took a separate villa. The mock "honeymoon" was still going on, as the money was not forthcoming, and they began to fear some unexpected step on the part of the old man—that he had possibly an unpleasant surprise in store for them.

At the same time Urmánov received visits from his fellow-students, and invited me, among others. The "young couple" led a gay life, rowing, driving, walking, giving and receiving many visits, so as to remain alone as little as possible. A feeling of youthful shyness withheld me from accepting my comrade's invitation.

One evening I came upon Urmánov and his wife in one of the sidepaths—quite unexpectedly. He

was sitting on a bench and she standing before him, as if asking him to walk on ; but he took no notice and remained motionless. His hat was tilted a little backwards, his head flung in the same direction, his lips were parted, and his face wore an expression which did not belong to it and which was not pleasant to see. I had only once before seen him with that look—during a discussion at a students' meeting, The man with whom he was arguing was unpleasant, but clever, and remarkably self-contained. Urmánov grew excited ; his personal dislike to his opponent made itself evident both in his manner and his language. It chanced, however, that his antagonist was in the right, and he had no difficulty in refuting Urmánov's arguments. On the other hand, it was plain that it pleased him to have roused the devil in Urmánov whom he still further irritated by jokes and sarcasms. It was as if there awoke in Urmánov some petty, evil, malicious imp which would otherwise have slumbered in the depths of his fiery yet lovable nature. His eyes glowed, his face was distorted, he lost his self-control, denied manifest truths, unceremoniously turned his back on his own principles, well knowing he was in the wrong, and that his friends knew it likewise ; all of which

made him more frantic than ever. The audience who were usually carried away by his ardor and sincerity, turned against him and burst into peals of ironical laughter, whereupon Urmánov fell more and more completely under the dominion of his baser self, against which he could no longer struggle.

For several days afterwards he was low-spirited and seemed ashamed of himself.

Now his countenance wore the self-same expression. As I drew near he left off speaking and looked me straight in the face with frankly malignant eyes. He watched me, as if he were counting my steps and waiting impatiently for me to go by ; there was something obstinately defiant and cynical as well in his attitude as his appearance.

I felt very uncomfortable, and not wanting to disturb him, quickened my pace as I passed the bench.

“ Mr. Gavrilov ! ” cried suddenly the American lady.

I started in surprise, and stopped short.

“ Did I startle you ? Forgive my speaking to you without being introduced ; but what does it matter ? We have known each other a long time. . . . Where are you going ? ”

"Yes, certainly," I stammered in confusion. "I . . . was going . . . to fish."

"Really? How nice! You have two lines, take me with you. Will you? And he can wait here on the bench" (pointing to her companion).

"I . . . I . . . with pleasure."

"Come along, then. Where were you going? Not far? All right, come."

Her voice, at first undecided and seemingly confused, was now firm, even slightly mocking. I gave her a line and, flinging it across her shoulder, she walked on beside me.

Not far off were two benches for fishers. Slightly lifting her skirt, she mounted lightly on to the plank, and threw her line with a bold toss.

"Wait," I said apologetically. "You must have a bait."

"Why, of course I must!" she answered laughing. "I actually forgot the bait. Will you put it on, please?"

I put on the bait clumsily, with a shaking hand, and threw my own line as well. As I felt very stupid I avoided looking my companion in the face, but neither did I watch my float properly. I could, however, see the end of her line reflected in the water, and the circles made by her float. The float

quivered, disappeared, appeared again, then suddenly began to swim off towards the opposite bank.

Will this stupid business soon be over, I thought.

“Well, will it soon be over?” said Urmánov’s voice from the waterside, in a tone of suppressed anger.

“No, not yet,” she answered, without turning her head. “Pull in, pull in, you have a bite!”

To my annoyance and surprise, I had really hooked a large fish. I grew nervous, bent down awkwardly, and nearly slipped from the bench. Something heavy dragged at the end of the line, flashed through the air in a silvery bow, and dropped into the water with a thud. It was a large tench. Waving its tail once more on the surface, it disappeared, leaving me standing with lifted rod and stupidly open mouth.

“Oh, what a pity!” she said, in a slightly drawling tone, and in her natural manner. “Such a big one!—There now, I’ve got one!”

She jerked the line skilfully and easily. A small carp described an arc through the air, and fell on the grass near Urmánov.

“Take it off!” she said, with a quick, searching glance at her husband.

I, too, looked at him curiously. Would he take it off or roughly refuse?

"Shall you soon have done?" he asked, shrugging his shoulders.

She raised her line, took off the carp, and threw it back into the water.

"You are not polite," she remarked, throwing the line again.

It grew dark ; so much so that we could scarcely see our floats. Among the reflections of the trees on the opposite bank, a faint glimmer showed in in the blackening depths of the water. The moon was rising. Then came another gentle plash ; again her line whirled, and a second carp fell on the bank.

"Will you take it off?" she asked again.

I could no longer see Urmánov's face. He made two steps forward, and stooping, looked down on the grass.

"There then, I've taken it off. Shall you soon have done?"

"I think we have had enough."

"One can't even see the floats," said I, and I suppose there must have been a comically aggrieved tone in my voice, for she broke into a laugh.

"Poor fellow ! You are getting bored ? Why

didn't you say so before? Come along? Give me your arm."

"And the lines?" I asked.

"Put them on the grass. How helpless you are! There, give me your arm. No, no, that way" (correcting my clumsy fashion of giving my arm).

"Now come!"

We walked on by the lake, over which a faint mist was hanging. Its reflection in the water seemed fainter still. Looking at the water, I wondered how, a minute ago, we managed to see our floats. Now the water was quite black; a bird hopped after us along the grassy bank, accompanying our steps with little interrogative chirps.

Urmánov walked beside us, gloomy and taciturn.

X.

It was almost the first time in my life that I had walked arm-in-arm with a woman. At first, I felt uncomfortable, and could not keep in step; but she helped me, and by the time we were half-way down the main avenue, I was more at my ease. Our steps resounded clearly under the overhanging branches. She leaned so close against me that I could feel the warmth and pressure of her hand, the touch of her shoulder, and hear her breath. We were silent, and I thought we were going too fast; I wished the avenue had been endless. I forgot everything that had happened—forgot even whose arm was in mine. I was overpowered by the sort of general impersonal enchantment of a woman's presence,—the sense of an incipient love and a coming tragedy in which I could not foresee whether I should be an actor or spectator. There were moments when it seemed as if another woman were walking with me—the girl from the Volga. Oh, if

for any cause whatever she needed a fictitious marriage, how joyfully would I stand with her before the altar ! . . .

In imagination I walked arm-in-arm with her, after a stormy scene on the lake shore. There I had given way and told her all I felt. But now I conquer myself, as befits a man and a future worker in the "Great Cause." I tell her that she will never hear such words from me again,—never see one offensive look. I will force my heart to be silent, though it should burst with grief. Then she leaning towards me, chastely and confidingly answers that she appreciates my generosity. Her voice quivers, and I guess suddenly her secret, and my heart is filled with rapture.

At this juncture we stopped, and I ceased dreaming. We had passed the Academy, gone some way down the road, and reached the villas. The little houses were lighted up ; through the evening stillness we heard voices, laughter, and here and there the sound of soft whisperings ; it all seemed to come from no one knew where, to fade away, and then be lost, awakening the evening into unseen life.

The American drew her hand from my arm.

"Thank you,!" she said. "I took you by storm

—you didn't want to come. Now, I hope, we shall see more of you."

She spoke the last words rapidly, and turned to her husband.

"I think papa is gone to bed. You needn't come in. I will stop here to-night; he is not very well."

She went quickly in at the gate, then returned to us.

"You live at Vyselki, Mr. Gavrilov, don't you? So you will be going in the same direction as Nikolai. Good-night!"

I did not live at Vyselki at all. Nevertheless, we both turned round and walked on together, as though in obedience to her command.

I still felt the warmth of her touch on my right arm, and wished the walk had not ended soon. My day-dreams were broken and vanished. I was a mere boy again, *she* was on the Volga, and as she had not the slightest need of a fictitious marriage, there was very little likelihood that she would ever know the greatness of my generosity, and the vastness of my capacity for self-sacrifice.

I positively envied Urmánov, for whom all my dreams were reality; and although I observed something gloomy in his walk and bearing (I

could not see his face), it seemed to me that at the bottom of his heart he must be very happy,—even satisfied. I knew that in his place I should have been unspeakably happy.

The park was quite lonely. A couple, arm-in-arm, passed us and disappeared. By the lake the same bird greeted us once more with its hesitating chirp. I fancied twice that Urmánov groaned.

When we reached the crescent-shaped mooring-place, he stopped abruptly and crossed to the other side of the fence. I stood still in doubt and perplexity. We had remained thus for several seconds, when I heard his voice, hoarse, and quivering with rage.

“Well? I should like to know why you can’t go! Why the deuce do you tack yourself on to me?”

He said something more, but in a voice so thick with passion as to be inaudible. Raising his cane, he struck it with all his might on the stone wall, then, flinging away the fragments, as if not satisfied even with that, he dashed his hat on the ground, tore off his shawl and flung it into the water. He then turned away bare-headed, with his hair dishevelled, and paced rapidly towards the avenue

I pulled the shawl out of the water, picked up the hat, and followed him.

Half-way across the landing-stage he slackened his pace ; then turned back and came towards me. He was silent ; and I thought he was probably speechless from agitation. I could hear his heavy, struggling, uneven breath. He put on his hat, threw the shawl over his arm, stood a moment in silence, and then suddenly caught hold of my hand.

“Forgive me, my friend,” he said hoarsely ; “although—” He clasped my hand hard in a burst of excitement. Then dropping it, he leaned his head against an old willow which grew near the landing-stage. I ran down to the lake, filled my hat with water, and brought it to him. He drank a little and gasped for breath.

“There. . . . thanks. . . . forgive me, old man. . . . friend ! I’ll do everything, everything ! . . . I’ll get her money for her, I will give her a passport. Don’t think. . . . anybody : . . . that Urmánov is a scoundrel. Oh ! but if you only knew what that woman is like !”

Something like a spasm came in his throat ; but when I would have fetched him more water, he stopped me.

“No, don’t,” he said squeezing my hand tight. He seemed afraid that he should not be able to finish what he wanted to say.

“You imagine that she is really interested in you ; that she really . . . wanted to know you ? . . . Stuff and nonsense ! It just came into her head that minute. Just for a moment she found you useful ; so she took you and turned your head. . . . She,—I beg your pardon,—made a complete ass of you. And now she doesn’t need you any more. For a moment. . . . I, too . . . I know, I know, it is my own fault !” Here he broke off suddenly, dropped my hand, and walked away.

I did not follow him ; I only watched his figure passing the landing-stage, and disappearing down the road, under the faint glimmer of the rising moon.

XI.

HOWEVER strange it may seem, all that had happened filled me with childish delight. This is just the right thing, I thought; love, real living love; not out of a book! Some day a similar storm will burst over me; and I, too, shall suffer and I, too, shall have something to fight against—and to conquer!”

The evening grew colder,—more beautiful.

The sky was bright; yet the trees in the park and on the island stood out in darkly defined clumps. Their reflections were lost in the depths of the water, yet deeper still the stars shone and twinkled; and a little white cloud floated like a dream in the purple gloom. Somebody's boat moved over the smooth surface of the lake, now vanishing in the shadow of the shore, now creeping out into the open water and seeming to hang in an abyss of blue space. In the boat I could see two silhouettes. They were evidently enjoying this quiet evening, with the rising moon, with the

trees in clusters dreaming above the lake, and the leaves falling from the boughs, fluttering silently through the air, then vanishing, and leaving behind faint circles on the water.

A man's voice began to sing softly a song evidently intended to her alone ; the singer not caring to scatter the tender sounds afar. (I do not remember now what the song was ; and probably if I were to hear the same melody again it would not seem the same). It was the song of that particular evening in my life, an evening which never returned. It was full of sorrow and love and a kind of joy in that sorrow and love quivering somewhere deep down in the unseen.

I, too, was sad. I felt that I was in love with the fair American, though not with that American whom I had seen at the station and with the General, but with her who had walked in the avenue, arm-in-arm with me in the darkness, and who in my thoughts was so strangely blended with the girl on the Volga. At the same time I loved Urmánov, who had cursed her, and yet his curses made her still dearer to me. I was in love, too, with the girl on the Volga ; and with the evening ; and with the man who was singing on the lake ; and with the woman for whom he sang.

When the moon rose quite high and lighted up the shore, I saw from the distance the fishing benches ; and my ear caught the chirruping of the same bird which had asked questions while I was walking with the American.

I went home with a full heart. Titus, my roommate, was lying on his bed, dressed and asleep. In his hand were some papers—the poor fellow was expecting a re-examination—and the lamp was burning on the table. He had evidently been waiting for me ; but I had no wish to waken him ; for I knew he would begin to talk and scare away my fancies ; and I did not want to lose a particle of them. I crossed the room softly, looked a moment at the face of my poor Titus, worn out with cramming, whom I loved now more than ever ; and taking the lamp, went to my table. Opening the window and letting the rustle of the bushes and the dreamy howl of a dog somewhere at Vyselki mingle with the snoring of Titus, I sat down at the table, and, for some time gave myself up to contemplating the impressions of the evening as they disposed themselves harmoniously in my mind. Then I began to write.

I had a friend living in the little country town where I had been at school. He was too poor to

come to the capital ; and too practical to start off at random. He had therefore for over a year, been fagging at lessons to scrape together the money he needed. That night, in my agitation, I, for some inscrutable reason, thought of him ; and although we hardly ever corresponded, wrote him a long epistle. Afterwards, I had the opportunity of reading this letter. In effect it was a hymn in praise of student-life ; opening out future vistas of young love, and lofty aspirations. All this I illustrated with fact, and with the vivid sensations which filled my heart. The result was a picture in which everything came out beautifully ; everything ! even Urmánov's suffering was tinged with happiness. It was very cruel to send this tempting picture to my poor anchorite friend. He told me afterwards that he wept with rage in his room in the dead-alive little town ; and was so rude to the headmaster that he nearly lost his situation.

As I finished writing, a gust of wind blew in at the window and scattered the leaves of paper about the floor. By this time, it was nearly day-break ; the dawn was shimmering through the window. The dog had long since left off barking ; but I fancied that the bird by the lake was

still repeating its questions. That, of course, was only fancy.

Raising the lamp above my head, I cast its light on the haggard face of my poor Titus. The light and the chilly air woke him and he looked at me. . . . I laughed; and he laughed too, without knowing why.

“Is it late?” he asked, looking round.

“It is morning. What do you think, Titushka, is it worth while living in the world?”

“Quite worth while, Gavrik; only this confounded chemistry—” he added mournfully.

We both burst out laughing. Then we undressed, put out the light, and went to bed, still laughing. We left the window wide open, although the gust flew in and kept humming round our ears.

XII.

THE autumn was late that year. Though all the leaves had fallen the earth was still warm. Even the latest of the summer visitors were gone, leaving warm days behind them. The park grew empty, bare and light. All its summer decorations lay like a russet carpet on the earth : and a warm, blue mist floated between the tree trunks, filled with the spicy scent of fallen leaves and damp earth. The dew dripped from the branches like quiet tears of farewell.

The General had long disappeared from our horizon, with his green shade, angry looks, mumbling speech and taciturn man-servant. Latterly he had seldom been seen in the avenues of the park ; and, when he did come out, moved feebly, his head shaking more than ever. His eyes stood out further and had a strange stony glare. But they expressed only helplessness ; bodily sickness and general weariness of life. When I saw that expression, I involuntarily looked away,

feeling within me a sort of dismal pity for the man.

Yes, I said to myself; but why did he demand a false oath and the breaking of a free bond? The fact is, however, that I felt the need of justifying to my own mind my former hatred of Ferapontyev.

The lectures were in full swing. I still felt almost a schoolboy's delight in making the acquaintance of new professors and new subjects, and the beginning of a new term generally. The arranging of my notes, the life in a circle of comrades, the students' meetings at which I felt myself a full-blown citizen in comparison with the crowd of freshmen--all this absorbed me and for a time obscured the recollection of Urmánov and dimmed my interest in the tragedy of his life.

Then the first snow fell, and in such quantities that the porters had to clear paths to the Academy. In the park it lay in a smooth, even sheet, covering the clumps of trees, the stone staircase with its vases, the walks with their shrubs. Here and there the stalks of dead flowers stood out, and lumps of snow, like tufts of soft cotton-wool, covered the heads of the frozen asters. For the rest, the foggy sky, after unexpectedly shaking down this mass of snow, continued to breathe warmth

upon the earth, and soon the snow began to melt. Water dripped from the trees ; and all the air was full of that mysterious murmur which bespeaks the presence of warmth, soft weather, and tiny unseen streams.

That day, as I worked in the draughtsmen's room, I saw from the window somebody who looked like Urmánov. He was walking in the avenue over the unbroken snow ; and his tragic figure formed a striking contrast with the virgin stillness of the park. Hastily flinging on my overcoat, I ran out after him, calling him by name. The figure walked on without giving heed. After going down the main avenue it turned and disappeared among the tree-trunks. I stood still a moment, looking at the lonely foot-prints. The veil of snow was unsullied save here and there by the light marks of rooks' feet, and a squirrel, running from tree to tree, had left traces of its path. A few dead boughs, which had fallen beneath their burden of the snow, showed black on the white surface.

My imagination was struck with some peculiar significance in the line of lonely footsteps across the virgin snow of the park.

“Urmánov !” I called again.

My voice rang out clear among the trees. Several rooks started from the boughs, shaking down lumps of snow. Then the faint echo of my cry came back to me from the lake which Urmánov was approaching. Though he must have heard me, he neither looked round nor altered his course. I saw in this inattention a sign of hostility, not to me personally, for I myself should not have recognised my own voice, but to any one whatever who called to him in the mournful solitude into which he had plunged.

I felt sure that if it were Urmánov his face must again be wearing the gloomy and doggedly sinister expression which I had twice seen on it before. For that matter, I was not certain that I really had seen Urmanov. My fellow-students, when I told them of the incident, assured me that he had left Moscow a month previously.

As for the American woman, she had got her money and returned to America.

By the next morning the snow was half melted. Here and there the black earth peeped out, and in the morning a thick warm mist hung over the landscape. During the day it partially cleared off; and sharp, cold currents swept past, as though the frost were beginning to stretch out its icy fingers. The

air became a clearer medium for both light and sound. The black spots of thawed earth, the damp fences, the humid tree-trunks and bushes all stood out clear in the atmosphere, and seemed to have grown heavy and dark and sorrowful.

The rattle and rush of the goods trains came from the distance so clearly and distinctly that one could almost distinguish every thud of the engine, every click of the wheels. When the train came out of the cutting it seemed quite close. It moved through the snowy fields like a long black serpent and something rumbled and steamed beneath it, as though the earth itself were boiling under the black band that moved along under the foggy sky from west to east.

As we sat in our room after dark, Titus and I heard the rumble of one of these trains through the closed window.

"It is curious how long that engine whistles," suddenly remarked Titus, raising his head from his notes.

He went to the window and opened it. A great noise rushed into the room. Something was scraping, groaning and screaming, as if right underneath our window. Then the whistling and scraping stopped, and all was quiet. Leaning from

our window in the darkness we saw lanterns moving along the rails.

“The train is gone off the rails,” said Titus indifferently. “That happened once last year. Come along Gavrik, let’s have tea.”

But still I stood, looking out of the window at the dark field and the little lights gleaming like glow-worms in the night. After the sounds that had just filled the evening air there was something in the sudden silence weird and startling. The moist breeze shook our window-frame; a brook, half released from its frosty fetters, gurgled under the snow, and the bushes swayed their dry twigs under our windows.

Then the train moved on again, with a rumbling noise dying away in the distance. The night grew quite dark, impenetrable clouds covered the sky, and only one light remained on the spot where a moment ago there had been so much hurry and movement.

I shut the window.

Titus and I sat up long after midnight, carrying on a frank, delightful conversation. Then I put out the light and fell sound asleep, never thinking how long it would be before I should know such sweet, untroubled sleep again, nor that the last of

my childish dreams hovered round my pillow on that last night of my youth.

Yes, if since then I have known joy, emotion, hope, they have certainly not been the same joys and hopes, and I have dreamt other dreams.

XIII.

I WAS wakened next morning by a knock at my chamber door. Though the gray winter dawn looked in at the window and the flame of a candle shone through our ground glass door, it was still dark in our room. Soon the light disappeared, and the familiar tread of Markelych, the porter, sounded in the corridor. From the corner where Titus' bed stood I heard sleepy sighs and lazy movements. Titus was dressing.

I surmised that he had heard some news. If anything happened during the evening or night Titus was always the first to know of it, thanks to Markelych, who was devoted to my friend on account of his simplicity and his habits of order.

"You might at least put your books away," old Markelych used to say to me, pointing with his finger to my table. And he looked reproachfully at me from under his spectacles, which were tied around his bald head with a greasy string. "Just look at Titus Ivanich, that's what you may call a real tidy gentleman."

With me, as with most of the other students,

Markelych usually put on a reproachful manner, and only spoke to order us about; but he was really fond of Titus, and gave him all the latest news and gossip. On wakening early in the morning I used greatly to enjoy listening to these simple-minded conversations. Titus had a delightfully naive way of putting himself on Markelych's level, giving him in return original suggestions, sometimes even improvised lectures on scientific subjects. It happened occasionally that I could not help laughter at them, whereupon Titus, bashful yet good-natured, would laugh too, and Markelych growl indignantly.

"I don't know what there is to laugh at; Titus Ivanich is a bit cleverer than most people, and he always crosses himself when he goes up for examination, and there you are giggling at nothing. If you ask some folks what they are laughing at they don't know themselves—ugh! . . ."

And the old man would angrily pick up the clothes he was going to brush and leave the room, shuffling along with his old slippers, the thick hems of his trousers dragging on the floor.

That morning there had evidently been another conference, and this put me into rather a nonsensical humor, all the more so as Titus looked very

dismal. I could not see his face, only his long, lanky body showing white in the darkness. He put on his boots, sighed, and stood still a moment ; then after another deep sigh he lighted a cigarette. As he puffed at it intermittently the little gleam in the dark room seemed to express confusion and agitation.

“ Markelych seems to have brought bad news this morning, Titus Ivanich, ” said I, in joke.

“ Ah, you heard ? ”

“ No I didn’t ; but I hear now. You are sighing as if it were examination morning. ”

The only notice Titus took of my joke was to puff still more furiously at his cigarette, making the mouthpiece squeak again. Presently he took it from his lips and said bluntly—

“ Last night some one threw himself under the train. ”

Even this ill-omened news failed to put me in a less frivolous mood.

“ My dear old Titushka, ” I remarked in a tone of ironical sympathy, “ somebody dies in this world every day. You and I too, alas ! will some day succumb to the universal law. All men, all people——”

“ It is very near, ” Titus answered gloomily.

“Then the whole point lies in the melancholy event occurring not far from Titus Ivanich. If it had been a hundred versts off——”

“He did it himself,” interrupted Titus, still more gloomily.

“Well, what of that? In that case it was a voluntary action.”

I, too, lighted a cigarette, and puffing smoke into the darkness began persecuting Titus with rationalistic questions.

“Now, just think, Titushka, is it not much more melancholy when a man dies who wishes to live? If one feels one’s-self useless, superfluous. The ancients had a tradition about Hyperboreans; when their old people had thoroughly enjoyed life they used to walk into the water and die. To speak plainly, they drowned themselves. It was very sensible of them. When I grow old and begin to feel that I am useless, that I am, as one may say, taking more from life than I can give, I——”

“You are talking nonsense,” interrupted Titus angrily.

I burst out laughing. Titus, who worked very hard for his living, was exceedingly careful of his

health, and for some time past had been afraid of death. I rejoiced in the consciousness that my nerves were strong and that my "way of thinking" placed me above foolish and superstitious terrors. I had slept well and felt fresh : I wanted to do something out of the common as an outlet for my superfluous energy.

"Titushka," said I, throwing away the end of my cigarette, "do you know what?"

"What now?"

"Let us go there and see!"

Titus struck a match, and lighting the candle, eyed me askance. His face wore a scowling and sleepy expression, and he regarded me rather sternly, as he might have done a naughty child. Titus had rather a domineering way at times, after the fashion of Markelych. This time he said very gravely,

"You're a clever fellow, Gavrik, and also a terrible fool."

I laughed again, and being by this time half dressed, began to wash, enjoying the fresh feeling of the cold water. Titus looked at me interrogatively.

"You are not really going?" he asked when I had finished.

“Of course I'm going: and I hope you will go with me.”

“Not for the world!”

“You are silly, Titushka.”

He shrugged his shoulders. I knew that gesture, it meant that Titus was not going to argue, seeing beforehand that it would be useless, but that his decision remained unshaken.

I dressed and went out.

XIV.

As I left the house and went into the cold air an invigorating sense of freshness came over me. The sun was not yet risen. It was that indefinite interval between night and dawn when light mingles with darkness and sleep with awakening, and I felt that I was not quite awake; the vague floating images of sleep still kept passing through my mind, and everything around looked somehow different—new and strange.

The sky was entirely covered with clouds, the Academy windows looked blindly out on to the square, and the bluish reflections of dawn were beginning to play on their convex panes. Lights were burning in the basement with a reddish, greasy look, like the light of the street lamps just before they are extinguished. By the church stood a policeman in his sheep-skin coat and huge goloshes, yawning and waiting for the relief-guard. A slumbering sledge driver passed; he had probably taken some students home after a frolic, and

was now fast asleep on his seat while his horse trotted slowly along the familiar road. A dog ran out from somewhere, crossed the square as if looking for something, and then went towards Vyselki, meditatively hanging his head and curling his tail between his legs. The dog, at any rate, had begun the day, though as yet did not seem quite decided as to his plans.

I, too, was in a meditative and indefinite mood. The chilly air penetrating my coat, reminded me of my warm bed I had just left. Having sat up late with Titus the night before I could well have done with some more sleep.

However, I went yawning down the avenue that led to the station. This was rather from a kind of inertia than any conscious intention of accomplishing an aim. I thought no more whither I was going, than why I walked instead of flying, or grew warm with exercise, or let my fancy wander. Fragments of my life, dreams and some bits of old memories followed one after the other like formless clouds in the sky. I had never yet known real, gnawing grief, and slight melancholy is really a pleasant feeling. It forms a shadow in which the soul can grow, as flowers grow during a warm summer night.

The bare branches rustled in the avenue. I recalled that avenue with summer foliage, and saw again Urmánov walking arm-in-arm with the American. Then, no doubt, he was happy, and his heart as sunny as the avenue; but now . . . she is gone away, the leaves are fallen, and he is wandering about thinking of her.

“I must look him up to-day; I know the lodging where he used to live, I will tell him that I understand him, and earnestly sympathize with him. That will not seem offensive to him, I shall be able to say it in such a way that it will not be strange, for my words will simply express my sincere feelings which fill my heart. He will understand, and press my hand and say that indeed it is hard for him. But of course he must reconcile himself to it as an inevitable sacrifice; he knows that great results have never yet been attained without overcoming merely personal feelings, that now, emerging from this struggle free and strong, he can attack his great problem. Perhaps even . . . I shall read him the poem I have dedicated to him . . .”

I did not notice that I had walked the whole length of the avenue, and was unpleasantly startled when I saw the roof of the little shed at the station,

peeping out from behind the hillock at the end of the road. I was so happy ; Urmánov and I were both so happy ; and at the moment I really did not know which of us was the happier, I the consoler, or he who needed consolation. No ; he was the happier—of course—in any case I would gladly have exchanged places with him. I was still a lad. I could only look on at other people's lives ; but he was living through the joys and sorrows and sacrifices of a man's life.

I had become so absorbed and was so happy in my dreams and the glowing words of sympathy which I meant to address to Urmánov, that I had it in my mind to turn back and go on dreaming all the way home. Why should I look at the thing lying there beyond the hillock?

At that moment, however, I trod on something, and stooping down picked up an elegant little pocket-book. On the upper flap was a crest, and an embroidered inscription, "Souvenir." When I opened it, a little sheet of paper fell out.

By this time it was light, and mounting the hillock I read without difficulty the printed address on the outside. Then followed this :—

" N— Y—

" Twenty Fourth Street,

" Boston,

" U. S. A."

This roused me at once. I woke up with a start. Till then I had been lost in my dreams, but now they vanished in a moment and I began to have a dim foreboding of something very different, though of what nature I could as yet form not the faintest idea. Then I opened the letter. The words I saw there sank into my soul, and time has not effaced them from my memory.

“Honored Fellow-Countryman,

“I write for the last time, for you must know, positively, and once for all, that these are Ellen’s and my last words to you.”

On this little dirty leaf of paper there enrolled before me the epilogue of Urmánov’s tragedy. It appeared that Urmánov had proposed to his rival that he should go to America. He would then renounce formally (so far as it could be done) his marital rights on condition that Ignatyev renounced his actual rights. This done they would engage in a free competition on equal terms for the lady’s love. The answer was cold and somewhat ironical.

“No, my honored colleague, it won’t do! Of course all this is very romantic; but I am not romantic. Moreover, the stakes are not quite equal.

You stake a fictitious right, I an actual right, that is to say, a reality. That the struggle for . . . love is a law of nature I acknowledge, as a general proposition ; but don't you see, on your part, that to arrange our marriage affairs as you suggest would resemble more the habits of buffaloes on the prairie than of civilized human beings? In one word, I consider our relations at an end. You knew the conditions on which you entered into the arrangement ; you knew what you were going in for ; and if Ellen had her motives you probably had yours, which are no concern of ours. As for your new demands, they were no part of the agreement and are quite foreign to our calculations. Our accounts are made up, and the balance is even. All right. We are not bound to discount any fresh bills,—Yours faithfully,

“JOHN IGNATYEV.”

“*P. S.*—As a proof that my wife entirely agrees with my view of this matter, she writes to you separately.”

XV

I LOOKED around in amazement. What was it? Where was I?

It seemed to me that it had suddenly become day, cold and damp. The last larches of the avenue were waving their boughs in the wind before me. Was it really only a minute since I was walking in that avenue full of visions of Urmánov, and my sympathy with him as a living and suffering man? Had that been a dream? Or was I dreaming now?

I looked down on the railway-sleepers, and the damp stones, and shivered as from cold. Everything looked wet, dirty, and sombre. Here and there along the iron rails were white spots, and there was something in that awful whiteness, clinging to the cold iron, that set my teeth chattering.

Two men were sitting with their backs to me on the platform steps, wrapped in their sheep-skin cloaks to keep out the damp. One of them was

speaking, evenly and monotonously, the other listening. In all probability they were talking of the most ordinary subjects ; but even now I often hear in dreams that even speech without audible words, and think of the damp morning and the splashed sleepers, and close by, in the shed, under a bit of wet matting, the thing that had once been called Urmánov.

And is this really the end of Urmánov's history and of my dreams ? Impossible ! It is too senseless to be true. And, to shake off the nightmare I ran hastily down on to the platform and lifted the cold, damp, frozen matting. . . .

But the nightmare remained. Yes, evidently I had been too self-confident. My "way of thinking" was no protection against this, the most horrible of all forms of death.

The station people, in their simplicity, had gathered up the suicide's brains and laid them mixed with sand and gravel, in the fragments of the shattered skull.

I stood before this thing, lost and helpless as a bird under the baleful eyes of a snake. And I felt how its deadly look pierced into the very depths of my defenceless soul.

The watchman laid his hand on my shoulder. I

knew the fellow well (he acted as guard), and I had often talked with him. But now he eyed me as if he did not know me, and his face wore an unwonted look.

“Don’t touch it, sir, it would be sinful,” he said sternly, taking the matting from my hand. Then, probably noticing my stupefied condition, he added in a gentler tone, as he recognized me, “Don’t, sir,—it isn’t good for you to look at.”

“But why, why did you . . . ?” I asked, in a vacant sort of way.

“What?”

“Why—did you—pick it up?”

“Why, what else should we do? For decency.”

“It is our business,” added the other man severely. “God will judge him for it up there, but we have got to lay him in the earth—that is our part.”

I looked at the speaker with a helpless, foolish smile.

“Lay him in the earth—Who? Then that—means—for then all is not over with Urmánov yet—there is still something to be done—some process to be gone through;” then I stopped a moment and broke into a laugh.

The men glanced at each other in astonishment.

“He laughs !” said the one who was a stranger to me.

“There ! There ! It has just knocked him over. He doesn’t mean to laugh. I tell you what, sir ; you go home, and God speed you. He’s not fit for you to see.”

“And—for—you ?” I asked mechanically.

“Well, we have to. That is another thing ; we are working men,” added the strange peasant, looking away. “But you only get upset. Go, my lad, go away.”

He gave my shoulders a push ; I went, and when, as I languidly mounted the hillock, I stopped short, he repeated :—

“There, there, go along.”

And I did go, but it seemed to me that I carried away with me something out of the shed.

Certainly I had been mistaken in hoping that my strength and “way of thinking” could arm me against that awful sight.

XVI.

I REMEMBER once hearing how a servant-maid, while cleaning a third-story window, slipped and fell on to the pavement. By some strange chance, she was able to get up and walk into the house. When asked how she felt, the poor girl replied that there was nothing the matter with her. It turned out, however, that she was all shattered internally, and a few hours later she died. . . .

I, too, when I stood in the shed, should have said that nothing particular had befallen me. Nevertheless, I also was shattered internally, although I felt no pain, no grief, no regret, . . . nothing !

There was only a strange calmness and an indescribable sense of isolation. I asked myself with a certain surprise : Had I really, really walked along that same avenue a few minutes previously ? Was it actually myself, not some other body ?

Did it ever happen to you in childhood to fall

asleep in the day-time, while, though the sun was shining, storm clouds were gathering on the horizon? You slept through the storm, and heard neither the pelting rain nor the thunderclaps, nor the crash of splintered window-shutters, and yet, when you awoke you knew that something extraordinary had befallen since you fell asleep. Everything seems new and strange—not as you left it—not like a continuation of the same day. . . . Is it the same day? Is it the same room? Or have you slept a whole day and night through, to the next morning, and even been transported to a new place? A cock crows outside; and his shrill voice sounds as defiant as ever. A dog barks, and its bark only reminds you of the bark of a dog of your own; one you had long, long ago. . . . And you can hear children's voices; but they, too, have a far-off sound, like faint memories of other and once familiar voices. And the little man who lay down in your bed? . . . You don't even know whether it was you yourself, or another who merely lives in your recollection. . . .

A like experience had befallen me. During the few minutes that I stood in the shed with the corner of matting in my hand, a great gulf had opened between my present and my past life. It was as

though I had really gone to sleep, and while I slept a hurricane had swept over my soul. For my former sensations had left me and faded into dim and confused memories. . . . Urmánov, . . . the American lady, . . . love, ecstasy, . . . his great mission, . . . whither is all that gone? When did it happen? With whom? . . .

There is nothing; and perhaps there never was anything. . . . Otherwise, how could I be so wonderfully calm? How is it that I neither pity nor accuse, nor feel angry with any one for Urmánov's death? I am not even sorry. . . .

No; there is nothing of that. . . . there is only. . . .

Again a slight inward shiver; and, through all my strange calm, I realize that I am not happy. It is as if there had dripped into me something gray, a spot of foggy mire, which I instinctively fear to disturb. I remember that with this fear was mingled a sense of squeamishness; as if I wanted to get rid of something almost physically repulsive. It was the recollection of the white substance lying there. The shattered fragments of skull.

Whither, I asked, myself, is gone all that which appeared to me as love, suffering, exalted aspirations and high thought?

It all lies there in the shattered skull, together with the sand and the gravel.

The gray, miry stain changes from a foggy spot into a cloud, hiding the light of life in my mind. As I thought of all these things the cloud continued to grow, and I shivered as with inward cold. . . .

Between the larches at the end of the avenue, I could see the chipped and dirty stone pillars of the gate. Beyond these again were the walls of the students' quarters, pitted with hideous gray spots where the stucco had peeled off. The wet roofs had begun to drip. The clouds were hanging low,—as if I had lost the sense of height—and the sky seemed as if it were covered with dirty rags.

“What is wrong with you, Gavrik?” Titus asked me anxiously when I entered the room; “you are frightfully pale. Are you cold? Have some tea.”

He ran for boiling water, made tea, and, according to his habit, carefully covered the tea-pot with a napkin. I sat on the bed and watched his proceedings indifferently as if they were no concern of mine.

XVII.

TILL now, I had been very fond of Titus. We had been school-fellows ; although he was much older than I. Poor Titus was rather ill provided with brains, learned everything with incredible effort, and regarded me with adoring admiration. I, in my heart, appreciated the energy with which he overcame difficulties, rendered almost unconquerable by his stupidity, and highly valued his good-nature, his sincere affection for myself, and his sound common-sense—a quality which I completely lacked.

I was often deeply touched by the sight of his arduous toil.

When preparing for examinations he would arm himself with notes a long time beforehand, sit down at the table, stop his ears, school-boy fashion, and begin to mumble over his book, repeating every sentence again and again. At these moments his face wore a mixed expression of suffering and stern resolve. When he thought that he had got a sen-

tence by heart, he would cover it with his hand, turn up his eyes, and repeat it, first with effort, afterwards more easily. Then a contented look would cross his weary face, only, however, to be replaced with the old careworn expression when he turned over a new page.

He was not ashamed to cram thus in my presence. I knew him well, and knew how hard it was for him, and how sometimes he would despair and imagine that he should never get his diploma. I knew, too, how much he needed his diploma—that all his future depended on it. In some far-away little western town his old mother was struggling on earning her living among strangers, and supporting an invalid daughter by arduous effort. For his sake these two women practised a ferocious economy, putting all their trust in Titus, and looking forward to the completion of his course, for the fruition of their hopes and redemption from the dreary slavery of their lot. And Titus did his best.

I knew all this, and therefore it never entered into my head to laugh at him when he sat rocking himself backwards and forwards with half-shut eyes and an agonized face ; or when, on going to bed, he put his book under his pillow according to

the schoolboy superstition that he should thereby get its contents into his head during the night. I understood that at this moment, Titus was not in the mood for discussions on rationalism. When he went up to the examination table and held out his hand for the ticket, I trembled for him more than for myself. And when he answered, as was his wont, word for word from the notes which he had learned by rote, I used to fear that the professor would notice the senseless monotony of his voice and his occasional strange mistakes.

All this bound us together in a close friendship. I always did my best to keep Titus out of the complications into which I flung myself with enthusiasm and which might, in one way or another, have spoiled his career. Indeed, when he did occasionally appear at our meetings, it was only as a listener. He himself never uttered a word; and only afterwards, when alone with me, would he venture to submit some idea of his own for discussion. In this there was much that was pathetic. Poor Titus would doubtless have liked to cultivate "ideas," but he knew that for him this was a forbidden luxury, that his business was to grind at his notes and get his degree. A certain shade of melancholy might therefore be observed in his

Platonic affection for "ideas," which he called by the generic name of "Philosophy," esteeming them in his own particular fashion from afar, and through me, as people esteem the distinguished acquaintances of an intimate friend. Sometimes I would try to explain these ideas to him, eagerly and enthusiastically, as was my wont. In these talks and expositions he greatly delighted, listening attentively and earnestly, and never interrupting me, however late at night it might be. But when I left off and went comfortably to bed, Titus, with a sigh, would light the lamp on his table, put his fingers in his ears, and try to make up for lost time. And if I awoke, even after a long sleep, I could still hear his weary but persistent buzzing.

Now while my anxious friend was busying himself about me, I sat looking at him with a dim, unsteady gaze. My general feeling of isolation and estrangement included even him, who seemed to have strangely altered and to be no longer the old Titus.

Did you ever, when looking at a man while your thoughts were elsewhere, lose consciousness of the distance between you and him? The figure of the living man becomes like a blurred mark, the size and position of which you are unable to determine.

The optic image forms itself in your eyes divested of all the impressions which usually accompany it. The sensation is a curious one ; and it has sometimes happened to me, especially in childhood, to detain it for several seconds. I was interested in this arbitrary conversion of living people into mental phantasmagoria.

For several minutes my friend had been moving about before me in this way, but now I did not find it amusing. I tried to shake off the sensation. I failed. For there was something else which I saw at the same time whether I would or no—the image of the broken fragments and what lay in them—the image which had fallen into my mind on the platform. I instinctively felt that it was this that rendered Titus so different and divested him in my eyes of the quality for which I had previously esteemed him. His love for me, my tenderness for him, the recollection of his old mother, of the bitterness of her homeless life among strangers in a strange country, of her expectations and hopes—all this was gone, far away, where Urmánov's tragedy and my late exalted enthusiasms were gone.

I was even half surprised when Titus suddenly offered me a glass of hot tea. I felt surprised that

he could hold a glass, and that I could take it in my hand and find it hot and heavy.

“What on earth is the matter with you, Gavrik?” asked Titus regarding me anxiously.

“What?” I asked, not knowing how to answer, averting my eyes.

“You look so . . . strange.”

“No, it is nothing.”

I put the glass to my lips, but drink I could not. The tea scalded me; to cool it appeared a difficult matter, and not worth the trouble. I set the glass on the table and lay down. In a few minutes I was asleep.

I slept long and awoke just as I had gone to sleep, suddenly, without any of that twilight of awakening consciousness which, in youth, is sweeter than sleep itself. It appeared as if I suddenly remembered something and opened my eyes at once.

Titus was sitting at his table, with his side face towards me writing. The sense of strangeness touching his personality had now disappeared; for though I had not resumed my normal condition, I was getting accustomed to my new mood.

Titus was tall and spare, the muscles and sinews stood out sharply on his long neck. His head was

bent to the left, and he nodded it regularly as he wrote, slightly swaying his long back, while his lips unconsciously formed the words that he wrote. All his muscles were tense, and he seemed to be writing with his whole body. He was evidently copying out a lecture. Sometimes, on finishing a sentence, he would lay down his pen with a sigh and look round at me, on which I shut my eyes tight and waited impatiently till he returned to his work.

Directly I heard his pen squeaking along the paper, I would begin to watch him again, in imagination tracing his muscular action back to his anatomical component parts. From the movement of the wrist I went on . . . muscular biceps, shoulder . . . reflex movements of the lips and neck . . . and all this guided by "a secretion of the brain." For some reason the process of secretion in this case is difficult. The thought which moves under Titus' light hair creeps along very slowly ; it is therefore perhaps quite in vain that the old mother and the invalid sister look forward to help from their Titushka ; the engine is none of the best.

Now Urmánov's engine was better. The movements in the brain were stronger and more definite ; the boiler worked under high pressure. Herein,

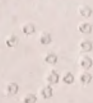
of course, lay the danger ; there was no safety-valve ; the passions began to boil too hard and blew up the machinery. That is Urmánov's whole history in a nutshell. The American went away. Urmánov died. How simple it all is, how very simple !

How lean and bony Titus is ! Evidently the brain, which he forces to perform labor beyond its strength, sucks into itself the other parts of my poor Titus. The central machine is overworked, and the levers and cog-wheels are wearing out.

And still under all these thoughts lay the thing that had fallen into me on the platform. I had only to look at it, and the whole picture would rise before me—the boiler smashed, its contents spilt, and the cog-wheels and levers scattered about, an utter breakdown. That means that a man is dead.

And this is life. . . . And this death.

There is some physical law moving it. This is life ; you may surround it with as many decorations as you like. Stop the movement with a mere touch . . . death ! You can dress it up in gorgeous and funereal fictions. For my part, it seemed to me at that moment that I saw both sides of the medal ; both with the same meaning ; both lead-



ing to the same result. It is quite simple, clear, and . . . disgusting.

Titus left off writing, looked at his watch, and carefully put up his notes.

“What time is it?” I asked.

Titus started and looked round.

“Ah! you are awake! It is two o'clock · time for the fifth lecture. Will you come?”

“All right!”

I got up languidly. I did not want either to go or to stay.

“What is going on there to-day?” I asked.

“Bratoshka lectures.”

“Ah!”

“What do you think, Gavrik; will they hiss him or not?”

I looked at Titus in surprise. His question reminded me of something that seemed to have happened long before the storm, or in a dream. Yes, of course, yesterday some one had got excited and said objectionable things to Professor Byelichka, and, if I remembered rightly, I also got excited yesterday about the same matter, and shouted like the others. But now I yawned carelessly.

“How the deuce should I know?”

Titus accounted for my indifference in his own

own way. He looked mournfully at me and sighed.

“Are you all right again? Are you well?”

“What should be wrong with me?”

“Well, I was quite frightened about you; you were awful to look at; perfectly livid and your eyes quite strange. Ah Gavrik! Gavrik! you were too sure of your nerve.”

It occurred to me that in truth I was not quite well. I felt a kind of nausea in my soul, as though I wanted to get rid of something to throw off something. For the first time I understood what it was that I wanted to throw off. It was the phantasm which had taken possession of me on the platform. But I no longer tried to get rid of it; I had either got used to it, or felt instinctively that it was useless to struggle.

“Yes . . . poor Urmánov!” said Titus with another sigh.

I looked at him with inexplicable annoyance.

“For pity’s sake, Titus, don’t let us have any nonsense.”

“I . . . why, what did I say?” asked my friend with amazement. “It was Urmánov there . . . Why, don’t you know?”

I looked at him again, trying the while to dis-

cern why his pity and his sighs should irritate me so.

“Yes, very well; I know. Urmánov . . . But you see, there isn’t any Urmánov. Well. Is there?”

“No—n—no . . . Of course, now . . . when . . . like that . . . ,” he stammered.

“Well; there you are; like . . . That is to say, you are pitying a person who . . . a thing which . . . do you understand me properly . . . doesn’t exist at all . . .”

Titus raised his eyebrows, looked at me timidly, as though trying to understand; he then gently submitted a fresh argument:

“But listen, Gavrik. All the same, you know . . . he . . . however that may be . . . he used to exist.”

“Well?”

“Well, then, that’s it. I am sorry for the man that was.”

I shrugged my shoulders. Titus had never before seemed so stupid and pitiable; and I wanted to tell him so point-blank.

“Look here, Titus! Wasn’t it I who painted Urmánov in such grand colors to you? Just try and remember.”

“That’s just it : there you see . . .”

“No, no ; wait a bit ! It is I who am talking to you now ; and you may take my word for it, . . . there isn’t anything there at all ; . . . do you understand ? There is nothing whatsoever ; and . . . there never was anything. Now let us go to lecture.”

I did not want to hear what Titus would say, or to talk any more myself. Did it ever happen to you to write verses or to prove a difficult syllogism in your sleep ? It all goes so beautifully, so clearly. You wake up and eagerly recall what you have thought out, in the hope that you have hit upon something grand only to discover that there is no rhythm in the verses and that the syllogism is a glaring absurdity. Something of this kind befell me at that moment. I thought myself extremely keen-witted ; everything I said sounded even cruelly brilliant ; and only long afterwards did I understand that the stupider of the two was myself and not Titus.

XVIII.

A POLICEMAN in a sheepskin coat and huge goloshes—the exact counterpart of the one who had been there in the morning—stood stolidly near the church ; a dog, the precise image of the cur I had seen at the same time, was running along the same road, only in the opposite direction. Everything—the square and the building and the sky, were just the same as they had been early in the day. But everything appeared profoundly uninteresting and simply annoyed me unspeakably. All that I saw seemed to be there purposely to remind me that an entire day had not yet passed since the events of the morning. None the less, I knew in my own mind that a whole eternity had passed.

“A letter for you, sir.”

The Academy porter handed me a letter, which I stuffed into my pocket without opening. The handwriting seemed familiar to me ; it was no doubt an answer from the friend to whom I had

written in my time of enthusiasm. What was it I had written? . . . Ah! yes . . .

“How stupid!” I said aloud and angrily.

The porter, who had been looking at me expectantly, turned away grumbling, with an offended air.

“Sh—sh—sh—sh!” hissed the sub-inspector, leaning over the top landing of the staircase.

The fat little old man, with his comic shaven face, did not look happy. The calm voice of a professor could be heard from the lecture-room close by; and from the other end of the corridor resounded a mingled hum of discordant voices. The sub-inspector strained anxiously his accustomed ear, listening to these sounds, in which an experienced man could catch a peculiar tone, for when a hundred young voices are raised a third above their ordinary pitch, the din resembles the angry buzzing of a disturbed hive.

The old man came up to me and took my arm; still straining his ears and looking anxiously towards the lecture-room. He had known my father, and as we were natives of the same province, he was rather partial to me. We often chatted together; and he had told me expansively of his youthful days, and how he had once “been in

trouble." This ruined his career ; and now he was thankful for his present situation, which he had obtained with great difficulty. He valued the post highly, and I sometimes felt towards him as I felt towards Titus. The "crust-of-bread" question—for himself and his family—was a perpetual cause of anxiety for the old man. For this he would agitate and worry himself, even to the extent of equivocating and twisting his mind inside out, assuming an air of pedagogic severity, and trying to hide his inborn good-nature. "Ah !" he would say at times, sighing deeply, "it is difficult to get on with you students ; I tell you so, in confidence, truthfully ;" and then we would both smile sympathetically.

Just now he had an official and careworn expression.

"Look here, Mr. Gavrilov," he said, "what's going on among you in there ?" And as he spoke he listened again.

"Do you hear that noise ?"

I, too, listened ; and then answered :—

"Yes, they are making a terrible row."

"What tricks are you up to ? Tell an old man honestly."

I shrugged my shoulders.

“What is it to me? However, I can tell you. . . Don’t be anxious. It is because something unpleasant has happened to one of them,—to Urmánov.”

“Why, what on earth do you mean? How unpleasant? They mean to hiss the Bohemian; that is it, nothing more.”

“Yes; it is true. Have you ever been to a slaughter-house? Have you heard when the butcher kills an ox what a row the other beasts kick up?”

The old man edged away from me, drew his arm from mine and looked at me with astonished eyes, even putting out his lips with a startled expression.

At that moment the figure of Professor Byelichka appeared on the landing; and as the old man hurried up to him, I burst out laughing and went into the lecture-hall.

Several students surrounded me at once, pouring out confused questions; some asking what I knew about Urmánov; others speaking of the Bohemian. I stood looking at them all; and I felt that I was smiling in a strange way. I had, somehow, completely lost the power of hearing the din with understanding, and the once familiar excitement seemed strange to me and incomprehensi-

ble. I only saw moving lips and gesticulating arms, and again laughed.

To my delight, the door opened again and the Professor appeared on the threshold, the subinspector's anxious face peeping in after him.

The students went to their benches. The Professor, going to his place, stood leaning with two fingers on the table, and waiting composedly for the noise to cease. Then his rich, even voice began :—

“The last time, gentleman, we stopped at—”

At the first sounds of this fine, passionless, and rather oily barytone I felt a certain sense of relief. The Bohemian was a first-rate lecturer ; but it was all the same to me ; I was quite indifferent to the subject of the lecture. Lately, there had been dark rumors concerning Byelichka. People talked of certain reform projects of his, of a character so utterly obscurantist as to render them incapable of adoption, and proposed merely to prove the author's servile devotion to those in power. There were other vague rumors of like import. None of the students had any authentic information, for the Reports of the Council-meetings were kept secret, and the Professors knew how to hold their tongues. Hence, there were

only dim conjectures, quite sufficient, however, to rouse angry discussions ; some taking the Bohemian's part ; others vehemently attacking him.

To me, in my then mood, all this was utterly indifferent : but I could not help admiring the *sang-froid* with which the Bohemian began his lecture. Though he must have known of the incipient hostility of his audience, yet he began at the point where he had previously left off and lectured as calmly as if nothing had happened. Only on entering, he raised his long, thick eyelashes, and cast from under them a rapid and watchful glance.

“ . . . Thus the monad of the species previously described may be defined as a simple sac devoid of even the most elementary organs. Taking up its abode in the stomach of a higher animal, it becomes completely surrounded with a nutritive environment. . . . ”

“ In this nutritive environment, gentlemen,” proceeded the Bohemian meditately and in a singularly dulcet tone, raising his eyes to the ceiling as though seeking for better and still more dulcet words, “ In this nutritive environment its existence is in many respects highly satisfactory. For it receives from Nature the utmost possible good,

with the least possible expenditure of energy ; and is not this the aim of many aspirations ? ”

Having made this slight excursion into the domain of generalization the Bohemian again glanced at the students. A low murmur, expressive of awakening interest, ran through the lecture-room, slight digressions from a dry exposition having always the effect of enlivening an audience.

The Bohemian's voice flowed on still more smoothly, like a stream of oil. Rolling out his rounded periods, he mounted gradually higher and higher till, towards the end of the lecture, he passed from individual facts to broad generalizations. I believe he really loved science ; he worked hard too, and was now himself carried away by his exposition. His eyes were fixed on the ceiling ; the wording of his phrases became more and more flowing ; the peculiar, unctuous notes of his voice grew more pronounced.

On the walls hung pictures, representing anatomical sections and cells, “leading a satisfactory existence.” Two skeletons stood, one on each side of the platform, with hanging arms, bent knees, and skulls drooping on one side, listening, as it were, with piteous attention, while the Professor knocked down one after another the barriers be-

tween the traditional "Kingdoms," and placed a mere nutriment-absorbing cell in a recognized place among other "satisfactory existences."

The audience had long since been carried away. I looked back and saw rows of eager faces and dilated eyes. Of the two contending influences—science on the one hand and indignation on the other—the former had obviously got the best of it; and the Bohemian, as representing science, held for the moment, not alone the attention but the hearts of his hearers.

But I felt myself equally a stranger to both these influences. While listening to the full, vibrating voice with its soft, rich tones, I had gone off into a dream. And in the only sounds which filled the lecture-hall, my fancy saw, floating and swimming, the contented cells described by the Professor, elementary and blessed prototypes of universal life.

Yes, it is quite true; this is the formula of life, simple and clear. . . . But why is he so pleased with it? What is there in this to kindle either enthusiasm or indignation? . . .

The lecture hour passed rapidly and imperceptibly. Towards the end I was suddenly seized with a feeling of intolerable depression and boredom, as though I had penetrated into the most secret es-

sence of life and found therein only filthy and nauseous dregs. I rose and went out. As I closed the door a round of applause rang out in the lecture-hall. I listened to it through the door with surprise and annoyance. The noise of clapping resounding along the corridor frightened the old sub-inspector, who came running with a troubled face. On learning what it was all about he drew a long breath of relief.

“That is all right! That is all right! Heaven be praised! They have just clapped a little; that is much better. . . They have not hissed.”

I could not get rid of my feeling of amazement. Was it possible that only yesterday, I, too, should have clapped? Yes, I should, and I reflected with a glow of self-satisfaction, that I was now above such-like frivolities. In there they shift about between enthusiasm and indignation, not knowing that to be impervious alike to enthusiasm and indignation is to understand Truth.

At the door was a two-seated droshky, waiting for a return fare to Moscow. The miserable jades in the shafts stood, with their heads bent and their legs wide apart, as if meditating on their dismal fate. I went down the steps and got into the droshky. Then, suddenly remembering that I did

not want to go to Moscow, I got out and walked as usual to a restaurant frequented by the students.

The idea suggested in Byelichka's lecture seemed to grow wider and wider. "Elementary processes"—this is the final summing up of everything. And every one has his own fashion of carrying on these processes ; Byelichka acts one way, some one else another way, what does it matter?

XIX.

At the entrance of the restaurant there stood behind the counter, as usual, a young German girl. She smiled a friendly smile, nodded her pretty almost childlike little head, and handed me my dinner-ticket. I bowed in return, and there must have been something peculiar in my expression, for the Fräulein becoming suddenly confused, dropped her eyes before mine, and all her face, even to the delicate, slightly protruding little ears, flushed scarlet.

A maiden, I thought, with a sort of malevolent flippancy; a specimen of restaurant virginity and German innocence. And, in reality, what is German innocence? It is said that if Shakespeare's Teutonic ancestors had not gorged themselves with beer and raw beef his types would not have been characterized by such ungovernable passionateness. I wonder what ingredients have developed in the German nation innocence so extremely delicate.

After this mental tirade, I went into the dining-room, where the girl's father, Mr. Schmidt, an exceedingly fat German, with a head that narrowed at the top, and protruding ears like his daughter's, was helping a student to soup with a majestically patronizing air, as if he were conferring on him a benefit for life.

I knew Mr. Schmidt, and we exchanged civilities every day. A certain strange resemblance between this fat and hideous German and his pretty slim young daughter was a continual source of amusement to me. To-day I marked this resemblance even in the smile which stretched his mouth from ear to ear; and I instantly found an appropriate simile; "They are as like as an old toad and a brisk young tadpole."

"Now ve vill dine mit goot abbedide," observed Mr. Schmidt, glancing pompously round the room. He repeated this phrase every day, probably in the hope that the example of his appetite, and the sight of his bloated figure would give us a high idea of the quality of his fare.

"Yegor, gif me place by Mr. Gavrilov."

Yegor laid a cover, served the soup, and uncorked a bottle of beer, whereupon the German set to work on his dinner with the air of a connoisseur

and master of his art. In a few minutes there was nothing left on his plate. Mr. Schmidt broke off a piece of bread, and after wiping his greasy lips with it put it into his mouth; this done, he looked at me, winking with an air of cunning triumph, evidently expecting me to admire his wit and grace.

“Vat is ze matter, Mr. Gavrilov?” he asked with sudden severity, “you look at anoder man as he eats, and your soup will be quite colt.” Then, in the manner of a teacher who tempers reprimand with a joke, he added condescendingly, “One must oil ze machine, or it will not go, you know.”

“Yes, Mr. Schmidt, just so; one must oil the machine. Well, we will oil it.”

All this time I had been watching Mr. Schmidt's proceedings as if it were the first time that I had seen this function performed in real life. I now took several spoonfuls of soup, inspecting the spoon every time in a hesitating manner, and thinking how very deftly Mr. Schmidt did the daily oiling of his machine. After swallowing with disgust a little of the half-cold liquid I helplessly put down my spoon.

“Well?” asked Mr. Schmidt encouragingly, at

the same time regarding me with sympathetic curiosity.

"I can't," I answered quietly, as I rose from the table.

"Ay-a-a-ay! zat means you are ill. Mina! Mr. Gavrilov is ill; fetch me quick von glass of my schnapps and a pinch of pepper; ve vill repair ze machine. . . ."

But I had already made my escape from Mr. Schmidt, who apparently cherished the fell intention of mending my "machine" as he would have mended his own.

By this time the class had broken up, and I saw the students coming along, hurrying to dinner, laughing and discussing the lecture and the unexpected ovation. I turned into a side-street to avoid meeting them.

Am I really ill? Why, only yesterday I too, should have gone tearing along, delighted with everything—the ovation and the lecture, and the prospective "oiling of the machine." And now? For that matter, the real reason is that my sight is grown so much keener that I have gained the power of seeing things in their true light. And if my nerves are a little upset, it merely shows that no man can digest the truth about himself. . . .

There they are, quite cock-a-hoop, and for no other reason than that they cannot understand the meaning of the simplest phenomena. Schmidt, the fat machine, when he oils himself merely opens his mouth from ear to ear. That is it; they are all merely so many Schmidts. . . .

Having no wish to see Titus I did not go home; turning instead into the park where I walked about the deserted paths till evening.

The park was very lifeless; the bare trees looked desolate, and here and there, from under the slushy, melting snow, rotting leaves peeped out. The sight of this dying Nature soothed and calmed me. Its dismal appearance harmonized with my mental condition; but in this decay of the fallen leaves, in the mournfully drooping yellow grass, in the faint scent of rottenness hanging in the air, there was nothing that offended and jarred on my inner sensations. I walked till I was tired out, trying to forget myself, listening to the tears dripping from the trees, and the damp, fallen branches rustling on the ground, and watching the twilight unfolding everything, until night came and covered all the melancholy and corruption of dying or slumbering Nature.

I went home late. Titus was asleep, but he

had left the lamp alight for me. The burner had got out of order, and the gas was escaping with a continuous thin hissing, which Titus accompanied by a rhythmic nasal wheeze, the result being a peculiar but not very harmonious duet in the otherwise silent room. Our large cupboard and bookshelf seemed to be listening with ironical attention to this absurd and useless wheezing. The whining hiss of the gas irritated me far less than my friend's hard breathing. The wheeze gradually passed into a snore ; as always happened when he lay on his back.

I could not sleep ; and so took up my notes. Perhaps this wise stuff will serve to send one to sleep, I thought. But I could not understand a single sentence. The words stood separately in my mind ; and, when my eyes passed on further, scattered and vanished. In a sudden fit of vexation with my "idiotic head," I tried to humiliate it by sitting down in the attitude which Titus always assumed when he was cramming. Like Titus, I stopped my ears and began whispering the words and sentences of my self-imposed task, mechanically repeating them, and rhythmically nodding my head.

I must have unnecessarily raised my voice and

so disturbed the sleeper; for after a while he moved suddenly, sat up in his bed, and stared at me with astonished eyes.

“Ah! what is it?” he asked in a voice like a sleep-walker’s.

“It is nothing; it is nothing,” I answered, ironically soothing him; “go to sleep, . . . machine. . .”

Titus does as he is told. His face becomes passive again; his mouth slightly opens, and the sounds recommence. I sit still on my chair, and a kind of terror creeps over me. The feeling of loneliness and isolation grows more and more intense. The gas hisses; Titus snores, . . . but, after all, they are only two machines. . . . If you lower the light the noise will cease; if you roll Titus over on his side he will stop snoring. I think of his vacant look and the automatic way in which he obeyed my command and instantly went to sleep, and a sense of dread comes over me.

A machine? . . . In my childhood, I was afraid of ghosts in the dark; now, when in the darkness of this night I am surrounded by machines, when even my poor Titus is transformed for me into a complicated automaton, I feel again the same old

horror, only it is deeper and more fearful than the horror of my childhood.

Though I had forgotten all about my notes I sat mechanically rocking my chair and waiting for something to come out of the silence and half shadows of the faintly lighted room. I had gradually slipped away from myself into that strange, desolate, inhospitable darkness peopled only by machines.

There is nothing, nothing! . . . The night, the cupboards, the dark corners and gray walls . . . the black windows, and the wind moaning in the chimney. . . . The machine called a gaslight squeaks like a gnat buzzing against my ear, and so piteously withal that I felt ready to weep. The machine called Titus snores and wheezes through its nose so senselessly that I want to smash it in pieces. And the machine that I call "*I*" lies without movement, without thought, merely feeling that the something cold, slimy, horrible and disgusting which dripped into my soul in the morning had become I myself, that whatever I felt in myself was it alone and that there was nothing else in me at all. . . .

Cold, empty, dead. . . .

Thus ended the first day of my new mood. The

next morning, I woke up more composed, yet still with the consciousness that this mood had taken up a larger space in my soul.

The clouds continued to spread, and I remember the following days only as a mist without light and shadow, like an autumn twilight.

XX.

“Won’t you come to the meeting to-day, Gavrik?” asked Titus one day, without looking at me; “come along, do!”

“What for?”

“There now, do come; you will see,” he said in a brighter tone; and then added significantly:—
“The *question* is of the very highest interest.”

He pronounced the word “question” half-shyly, with his eyes turned away and in the conscientious tone affected by unaccustomed persons when speaking of “high matters.” At any other time I should have understood his pathetic impulse; but now I only burst out laughing right in his face.

“Ah! How long have you been interested in ‘questions’?” and I laid an ironical emphasis on the last word.

This saying affected Titus like the stroke of a whip. He raised his head and looked at me, and our eyes met. A whole dialogue may be comprehended in a momentary interchange of glances.

Titus meekly asked me whether I really believed that he cared for me, and knew that I was treating him with a coldness and a cruelty which he had not deserved.

It sometimes happens when you are looking at an object or a person on which your attention is concentrated, you realize that somebody is standing behind you, looking at you, thinking, about you, perhaps smiling and holding out his hand to you ; yet you are unable to turn your eyes thitherward ; and the other presence fades into the misty background of consciousness.

It was thus with me. My attention was fixed on that gray spot which imparted its sinister hue to Nature and Life. Yet I could easily distinguish the manifestation of lower instincts, find meanness in noble actions and see in man an animal consisting of elementary physical processes. I was even rather proud of the keenness of my insight, and soon acquired the trick of indicating unpleasant characteristics by two or three words, an obscure hint or a subtle innuendo. In the result I gradually formed about myself a sort of solitude, and people—women especially—when they met my steady, analyzing look, would lower their eyes and hurry on.

I began to repel Titus in the same way. Again he cast on me an inquiring and imploring look, a look which reawakened within me a passing tenderness, yet I merely shrugged my shoulders and answered his gaze with a half-contemptuous, half-cynical glance.

Titus turned away gloomily, with a lowering face.

“Look here, Gavrik,” he said angrily; “lately you have acted just like a mad dog.”

“Just like a mad dog,” I thought ironically; one might have found a better simile; but Titus’s ideas are not freely secreted and mould themselves into wrong forms.

It appeared, however, that this time I had struck home; I was however no more sorry for Titus, than for Urmánov, or myself. I had hurt my friend deeply, but I simply watched him as an artilleryman watches the effect of a shot; and caring as little for the sufferings of my victim as he would care for the sufferings of his victim.

Meanwhile, Titus pulled his cap over his eyes, and put on his overcoat; then, tossing my books about, took from among them a work on sociology which he had lately bought for me. Thrusting it under his arm, he went out without looking back.

He had the air of a man who surprises himself by resolving on a desperate undertaking.

I afterwards heard that, on the same day, Titus, for the first time, made a speech at the meeting. He returned late with a flushed face and looking like a half-tipsy man, although he had not drunk a single drop of spirits. He came to my bedside and stood there for several minutes as if he wanted to say something, then turning hastily away he went to bed. In the night he moaned piteously and cried out several times in his sleep.

As for myself, I felt neither grief nor pity, being as I said to myself, "above all that," because I knew what others did not know. Though I had then no desire to resume my normal condition, I cannot look back to that time without an involuntary shudder. It was as if I walked, moved, and lived in a gray cloud, cold and formless, darkening the dawning light of my young life.

I remember how a cloud on the horizon once suggested to me thoughts of this kind. It was a somewhat frosty evening, the sinking sun had tipped the edges of the cloud with purple and gold. All the central part of it was of that dim blue in which unknown shapes form and disappear, and you cannot tell whether they are really clouds or

only the creation of your own fancy. You know that at sunset, such-like clouds can be very beautiful ; that dusky blue and soft rays fading in a golden mist kindle within you a whole flood of sensations. Night is at hand ; soon, it will hide everything and you will not have found out what was really there and what were the shapes forming themselves in the tremulous mist above the horizon. The night will fall ; and the cloud, it may be, will spread over all the sky ; and lightning will flash through the still darkness ; and thunder will crash over the earth. Or else the cloud will float away, following the retreating daylight, and flash, instead, on some other body's horizon ; and some other body's eyes will look upon it ; and similar thoughts and dreams will arise in some other body's mind. In a word, there is in that cloud a something which reflects itself in every human mind : either as vague dreams, or sadness, or a throng of fancies dim as the mist. Hence, the cloud contains an element of the thoughts and feelings which start into life within you, like sparks from the contact of flint and steel.

But when I looked at the cloud that evening, I felt that it was deceiving me, as all the world deceives.

It is a lie, I thought ; a lie and an empty, glit-

tering illusion. Reality has none of that beauty, of that gold, of that "Imperial purple." These are loud and empty words! Climb up to that tinsel loveliness, enter into it, and you are surrounded only by cold, penetrating mist. It is the same with life : once you look at it from the inside, it, too, is nothing but senseless inhospitable sleet and fog ; having neither beauty nor sunshine, neither purple nor gold ; neither light nor darkness, and without form and void. There is nothing in the world save unnumbered isolated facts, and what seems exalted, bright, and grand is merely tinsel and lies.

XXI.

IN the evening when I was looking at the clouds, I went again along the familiar avenue. The bare and frozen boughs struck against one another with a dismal, dry, cracking sound, as on that memorable morning, and through the avenue there swept the dreary, prolonged howl of the wind, full of the same cold, pitiless misery which filled my heart.

I had no definite aim. Then, and many times afterwards, I went to the station for no other purpose, so far as I could tell, than to watch with fascinated gaze the wheels of the first morning train. I had no idea of committing suicide; yet I never could say positively that I should return; and though I did return home that time and so many other times, it was not because I feared death or enjoyed life. Oh, no! I took to the station and brought away a darkened soul and a heart paralyzed by dull despair. All around me lay the snow; the furious winter storms dashed

by ; the telegraph posts moaned and creaked ; and from across the line the dismal little light of the watchman's hut looked askance at me. There, crowded together in the close air, lived the watchman's family ; and the red lamp, looking out into the darkness, seemed as desolate and pitiable as the poor creatures upon whom it shone. The children were strumous and delicate, the mother weak, ill-tempered, and miserable ; her life consisted in bearing children and burying them. And the father, with whom I used often to talk, was perhaps the most miserable of all. He endured his wretchedness only because, in his simple heart, he believed that it was part of some divine purpose. My heart used to ache when he talked to me and I considered his sunless life ; yet in those days I was not without hope. I believed that we should soon find a way of making life bright and joyous for all.

How, when, in what way ? That was another matter ; but the significance of life lay in that belief. Now I had no belief, and life had lost its significance ; and the sight of the uncompensated misery of the watchman's lot would have been utterly intolerable to me had I not been clothed in a panoply of utter indifference.

Nevertheless, the little light, glancing obliquely down on the snow, the road, and the steel rails, glimmered so sadly. . . . And nothing there to warm my frozen heart.

On the station platform was a little shed—the same where . . . A crust of ice, sprinkled over with frozen snow, covered the same bench. There I would sit, and while the wind whistled through the chinks, scattering sprays of snow obliquely against the boarded partition, recall that moment, rehearse those impressions once more, and resume that mental condition. The very air seemed saturated with an influence which penetrated my being, and brought back my old feelings. For hours together I would remain there alone with a spectre which, though I feared it no longer, seemed more terrible than all the spectres born of superstition. In them, at least, there is some kind of life—perhaps frightful, perhaps inimical, but still life. My spectre represented only the complete absence of life, the aimlessness, loneliness, and utter want of meaning of existence itself

I lost the consciousness of time. . . . Minute after minute fled away; the trains dashed past, rumbling through the darkness. In the carriages I could sometimes hear songs, music, talking. The

light from the windows fell in bars across the platform, shadows flitted past the windows, and in a moment nothing was left of them but memory. And yet I sat, absorbed, in my corner, waiting for I knew not what. . . . My feet grew numb and my fingers stiff; the cold went through and through me, mingling with that inner cold which had frozen my soul. My teeth chattered. I trembled and shrank from head to foot, and to myself seemed as small, pitiable, and insignificant as any half-starved dog. And when I looked back on my former proud dreams and aspirations, I could hear in the darkness my own laughter, sounding so strange and dismal that a sense of horror crept over me: it was as though I were being mocked by some lost soul or invisible fiend.

Then I would think of my warm room and tea, and get up to crawl home, dimly aware that some day the longing for another resting-place might drag me down there under the wheels. I weighed both possibilities objectively, as if the matter concerned some one else; the two ideas contending in my mind while my will remained passive.

And if, nevertheless, I let train after train pass and went home (Titus, whom I had forbidden to follow me, meeting me with a gloomy and furtive

yet relieved glance), it was simply because death appeared to me just as disgusting as life.

Yes, you may deem it a paradox, but to me this seems a universal truth : only those whose lives have been full and normal can face death calmly. He who has known intelligent joy has something to be thankful for. The man who has struggled and suffered sees in death a deliverer, a friend relieving him from the grievous burden of duty ; but he who has never in life experienced either intelligent joy or intelligent grief fears the mere mention of death, because there remains in his soul a void—something empty and unsatisfied. Death comes before life has given him what he thought he had a right to reckon upon ; a man of this type is bitter against both life and death. But still more so when, as happened to me at that time, a man becomes sick of life without struggle, or pain, or joy ; then death also appears sickening and hideous. For life and death are bound together by a living thread. I do not remember who it was that said, “Death is the child of life.” It is true in this sense : as healthy children are born of healthy parents, so a life that has been healthy in the full significance of the word is followed by a death as bright as the sunset of a clear day.

XXII.

One evening as I sat in the shed, in the state of mind which I have just described, the passenger train from Moscow began to slacken speed as it neared the station. Again the bars of light flashed across the platform and shadows moved in the dim windows, and I could hear sounds and talking from the shut-in life of the carriages. And once more it seemed like the mere echo of long past impressions. When, however, the train went on again, I found that this echo had left upon the platform a living being.

The red lantern at the end of the last carriage flung a ray of light on the solitary passenger, from whom I instantly retreated to the furthest corner of the shed. It was the girl-cashier from the Volga, who, as the navigation was stopped, had made up her accounts and returned to us for the winter.

She apparently expected that somebody would meet her, and found herself mistaken. Perhaps,

though, she was playing one of her audacious pranks, and trusted to chance for an escort. Be that as it might, there she stood, alone in the dark, looking round her. The train glittered in the distance like a red star ; the place was quite deserted ; and I sat still in the shed, trying not to stir.

The girl laid her hand-bag on the platform, and crossed the line to the watchman's hut on the opposite bank. For a moment I lost sight of her, but the next moment her slender figure reappeared at the open door.

"Grigoryevna ! Good-evening !" she called to the watchman's wife.

"Eh ! Who is there ?"

"I, I. Why, she doesn't know me !"

Grigoryevna answered in the languid voice of a suffering woman. The door closed ; but a moment afterwards both the women came out again.

"Dear ! dear ! What a pity ! He is just gone down the line. You had better wait a bit for him ; he will go with you."

"No ; it is all right ; I'll go alone. Good-bye !" And the girl went rapidly down the bank.

"No, but really . . . it is not safe ; indeed, it is not safe. Heaven forbid ! somebody might harm you."

"No, they won't. I'm lucky ; no one ever harms me."

These familiar words, accompanied by the old familiar laugh, sounded as if they had been spoken in my ear. Then she crossed the platform, and I withdrew further into my corner.

Why, I cannot tell. It seemed to me that the indefinite, half-conscious expectations which I had previously formed in the same place, referred to the event which was now coming to pass. I even fancied that, earlier in the day, I had felt a foreboding of her coming, and taken my "resolution" beforehand.

Be that as it might, there rose before me the living image of that past so near, yet already so far off.

Now I analyzed everything and mocked at everything. But, until this moment I had not dared to touch with my hideous analysis this girl whom I had once loved, and whose memory I still cherished, pure and unsullied. It lay dormant in the deepest recesses of my soul, together with some other memories that were also very dear to me. But I knew that they would be called up to judgment by my new mood, and if I once began to submit these memories and feelings to analysis,

I should never stop, and there would not be left in my soul one single untainted spot.

It is very likely that I was trembling in my corner from a foreboding of all this. It is possible, too, that I did not like to let her, so strong and full of life, see me shivering, shrinking, with the inner consciousness of a wretched little dog. Anyhow, I waited till she had started, and then followed her.

She walked quickly, and her figure now showed like a dim shadow in front, now disappearing altogether. I followed her, dreading to lose sight of her, yet, at the same time, fearing to attract her attention. And then, for the first time, the oddity of my position occurred to me: why had I not gone straight up to her? Why hide myself, and then creep after her like a thief in the dark?

For the first time I felt causeless shame. Why? I had done nothing wrong,—nothing with which to reproach myself. It is the shame of existing at all, flashed through my mind. It was the dread of showing her the dirty, gray spot in my soul.

This thought angered me. At the same time, as I could no longer *see* her, I feared I might lose her, and forgetting both the cold and my own shivering fit hurried on peering into the darkness.

Suddenly I quivered as if I had been shot, and

stood still, hearing at the same moment a low, startled cry. The girl, as it appeared, was tired, and, placing her portmanteau on the ground, sat down on it to rest herself. I thus found myself face to face with her.

For a few seconds we remained standing—she in surprised silence. . . . Then I held out my hand and said :—

“Good-evening, . . . Tonia.”

“Ah ! it is you ! There, I knew you would come. Why, Gavrik dear, how you startled me !” and, taking my hand in both hers, she pressed it warmly, laughing and talking merrily of her fright.

Why didn’t I see you on the platform ? Did you get my letter ? Why, wherever did you come from ?”

She showered questions upon me, and went straight on, without waiting for an answer. She had such a lot to tell me ; she had seen so much. And what was going on in Moscow,—in the Academy ? She asked after our acquaintances. But, first of all, how were the Sokolovs ?

The Sokolovs were a couple united in civil marriage. He was a good-natured student, no longer young ; she, an almost uneducated woman, also past her youth, with a freckled face and thin, close-

cropped hair that suited her face very badly. Tonia (as the girl-cashier was still so called in our circle) was a great friend of theirs, and usually lodged with them.

I grew confused at her question, and was hesitating what to answer, when she stopped short and tried to look at me closely in the darkness.

“Do you know, there’s something strange about you? . . .” she said half-interrogatively.

I smiled, and felt glad that she could not see how unnatural was my smile.

“Strange, quite strange,” she repeated. “You turn up from one doesn’t know where, . . . you don’t speak, . . . you don’t answer one’s questions.”

“Well, but you don’t give me time to answer.”

“No, no! Somehow—it isn’t that,” said the girl sadly, and then brightened up again. “Oh, well, I’ll find out all about that to-morrow. I shall stay here a fortnight.”

“And then?”

“Then? Perhaps. . . . Why, you know, I wrote to you. . . .”

She glanced at me again and walked faster.

“No, we’ll talk about that to-morrow.”

“Why? Because I am strange?” I asked in-

voluntarily smiling again, but this time with deeply felt bitterness.

“Y . . . yes.”

“Well, perhaps that’s better, after all.”

“There you see!” said the girl mournfully.
“Do tell me what is the matter?”

“It’s all the same. We won’t talk about that. But I am very glad to be walking with you now.”

“What did you say?”

“I say that I am very glad. . . . I really mean it. . . .”

“Is—is there any need to say that?”

She relapsed into an embarrassed silence, and walked on for sometime thinking. I, too, was silent and oppressed with gloomy forebodings. I had fancied, at first that just this once, in the darkness, I might, for a passing moment, enjoy at least the illusion of a happy meeting, although on the morrow my new mood might again assert the mastery. But I felt that even the darkness could not for long hide my secret. She could not see my unnatural smile; and yet she knew intuitively that there was something strange about me. And, indeed, should we have met like this, should I have spoken as I did, if nothing had befallen me?

“All right; we needn’t talk at all,” I said again,

although well aware that I had done better not to say it.

After passing the Academy and crossing the bridge, we arrived at a small villa, standing alone in a clump of young pine-trees. A stove was alight, and a lamp burning in the front room; and through the window, we could see three figures.

“Now, good-bye,” said I, stopping and handing her the portmanteau.

“Why? Aren’t you coming in?”

“No; you had better go alone.”

“Is anything . . . wrong between you and the Sokolovs?”

“Nothing particular.”

“But you know they are dear, good people.”

“I don’t dispute that.”

She stopped, made as if she would say something, but changing her mind, took the portmanteau from me, and held out her hand in silence.

I held it for a moment, and fancied that it trembled slightly, as though ready to respond warmly and strongly to the pressure of mine. But the moment passed; her hand slipped away from mine; and she said softly:—

“Good-bye.”

“Good-bye, Antonina Dimitrievna.”

A moment later, I saw through the window how warmly she was welcomed by her friends. Sokolov, a dark, stooping, broad-shouldered man, swung himself out of his chair and embraced her. His wife ran in from the next room, and, tossing back her thin hair, flung herself on the girl's neck. Syergakóv, a young student of the group to which I had formerly belonged, at first hesitatingly shook hands with her; then his face brightened into a smile, and he too kissed the new-comer.

I went up to the hedge without the slightest hesitation, fully determined to hide there and watch what happened next. I knew that I should probably be the subject of their conversation; and I was not mistaken.

For some time past I had observed that the people I met eyed me with peculiar attention, yet furtively. I knew that many considered me "cracked"; and this irritated me. At times, therefore, I would purposely say brusque and disagreeable things, carefully cultivating the art of finding out the weak points of these "sensible" folk. I had not been at the Sokolovs for a long time.

After the first greetings, Tonia, as she took off her cloak, asked a question which, as I could see

from her contracted brows and the expression of her face, referred to me.

Sokolov turned away and began gloomily poking the fire. He was one of those very good-natured men who always find it difficult to speak ill of any one, or to tell unpleasant news. Syergakóv sat down at the table and took up a pencil.

Tonia doffed her gray cloak and, flinging it on a chest, turned round, so that I could see her agitated face, and I inferred from her manner that she was repeating her question and telling them of her meeting with me. Then Madame Sokolov, sitting down on the chest, began to relate something. And her face gradually assumed an excited and indignant expression. I knew what she was saying. She was complaining that for some time past I had behaved very queerly, keeping aloof from my comrades and when I met her looking at her in the strangest way possible ; moreover, when she remonstrated with me, I had answered sneeringly that I hoped she did not suspect me of any Don Juan-like intentions.

Sokolov rose impatiently and made an observation, whereupon his wife broke off and looked at Tonia conscience-stricken. The girl's face was pale and sad. For some time nothing more was

said ; then Tonia turned her face away from them and stood looking at the fire. I could see her profile, her dark dress and the tress of fair hair hanging over her shoulder.

My eyes were glued to the window ; it was as if I were looking at people who mourned for me, for the “ me ” which had been and was not. A sense of overwhelming misery swept over my soul as if I were assisting at the burial of something unspeakably dear to me,—my own youth, and with it . . .

Strange ! From that time I have understood the legends of demons entering into men’s bodies and speaking through their mouths.

At that very moment when I suffered this unbearable misery, and felt so much tenderness towards this girl who felt so much for me, the dirty spot in my soul asserted its influence ; and for the first time my sneering analysis touched the girl’s image and my love for her.

A tress of fair hair, said some one within me, so distinctly that I started as if I had actually heard an internal whisper. The whole matter lies in the fair tress. Never since I began to grow up have I been able to look unmoved at a fair tress hanging down a girl’s back. A fair tress on a dark brown

dress suggests thoughts which still cause me acute distress.

At that moment, I heard footsteps and the sound of voices, one of which I recognized as that of Chernov, a comrade of mine both in the classes and the group. He belonged to a family of rich landowners, and it was known that he had once been in the habit of striking his female serfs in the face with his boots when they brought them to him badly cleaned. Moreover his harsh unsympathetic voice showed that his character was hard, and he possessed few attractive qualities. Many who knew him doubted the sincerity of his present liberal opinions ; but Tonia believed in him : and Chernov repaid her with a seeming affection bordering on devotion.

The students were walking rapidly and must have seen me ; but this did not embarrass me in the least. I quietly left the window and walked towards them, thinking that Chernov did not know of Tonia's arrival, but as he was going to the Sokolovs he would soon see her. And embrace her . . . fraternally.

When I came up to them, the students looked round in amazement.

"It is all right, it is all right !" I said roughly,

“don’t be confused, good folk ! Make haste ; Tonichka is come back.”

Chernov uttered a cry of joy ; and I impulsively, and to my own surprise, added bluntly :—

“And how her hair has grown ! . . . splendid !”

Then I burst out laughing. I can imagine how utterly wild this speech must have seemed to them. And yet, for me, it was the logical continuation of my thoughts. I must have seemed to my fellow-students completely insane, and I often think, now, that even in the thoughts of regular maniacs, who talk all kinds of nonsense, there is far more sequence than we usually suppose.

The students hurried to the villa and I struck off into the wood, walking straight on without choosing my way. I wanted to tire myself out. I needed exhaustion, oblivion, and darkness.

XXIII.

I WAS anxious to reach home quickly ; only to get in, to fling myself down on my bed, to go to sleep at once without thinking about myself or her, to have a lucid interval before the torture recommenced. . . .

In my boyhood, when I still retained my childish beliefs and said my prayers, I once awoke on just such a dark night, with a feeling of unaccountable dread. To drive away my fear I thought of saying a prayer, but a word which had no business there crept into the middle of it. I began again from the first word, only, however, to break down a second time in the same place. This happened several times in succession. At first, the interpolation was mere nonsense, but after a while I observed with terror that instead of meaningless phrases naive and childish blasphemies crept into my mind ; and the more passionately I began the prayer the more I was beset in the middle of it by sinful words and thoughts. Cold sweat broke out on my forehead and I be-

came postively convinced that a demon was taking advantage of the darkness to whisper bad thoughts in my ear.

Now, I had neither childish superstition ; nor was I tempted by imaginary demons in the dark, pathless grove. I fled from a soulless spectre which I bore within myself, feeling that it would devour the one thing which still remained in my heart uncontaminated and untouched ; that in a few minutes more, I myself should destroy the last pure image which was left to me.

I walked on fast, my heart palpitating, and at moments contracting in sudden fear as if grasped by an invisible hand. The sombre tree trunks, black pillars in a waste of snow, separated and drew back as I passed ; yet still a wall loomed large before me, and it seemed as if the park would never end.

All this time I had been walking at random ; but by a lucky chance I came out directly opposite the Academy. Titus had just returned, and was lighting the lamp. His cap was pushed on to the back of his head and his face flushed and excited. When he had finished with the lamp he turned round to me and gave an account of his theoretical conversations.

He no longer watched me and greeted me with

anxious looks ; and he failed to observe that I was in no condition to listen to his narration. He came up and barred my way ; and his long figure with its gesticulating arms stood before me like an absurd and clumsy silhouette, the shadow of his cap thrown across the ceiling.

“Just imagine,” he said, gesticulating excitedly, “Rouchin said to me. . . . No, I said to him :—
“No, no ; you are all wrong,—you look here ! . .
I’ll just prove to you. . . .”

A revolution had taken place in poor Titus which in my egostic reserve I had failed to notice. Since the day when I so harshly insulted him, he had flung himself into the very whirlwind of “philosophy” till then strange to him ; and his poor head was completely turned thereby. He had thrown aside his notes for books on social questions, which he studied incessantly, neglecting lectures, and never missing a single meeting. Jumping on the benches in the lecture-halls, he would strike into the middle of any discussion whatever, listening to nobody and continually interrupting other speakers rudely and vociferously. At first his fellow-students could not make it out ; then they took to laughing and finally, on the day in question there had been hot work ; for Titus was becoming a regular obstructionist. The others attacked him, demanding

a plain exposition of his views and trying to refute his arguments. This made Titus half frantic ; in his excitement he stamped on the floor, repeating over and over again the same words :—

“You are talking nonsense, all of you, sheer nonsense.”

I heard of all this afterwards. But now Titus stood before me with his cap shoved on to the back of his head, incoherently recounting his exploits.

“There ; you hear what he said ; and I said to him :—‘No but wait a bit!’ . . . Why ! whatever is the matter with you, Gavrik ? Good God ! ”

His face suddenly changed and became for a moment the face of the old Titus, anxious and startled.

“Leave me alone, for goodness sake,” I said hoarsely, pushing him aside. “I want to sleep,” and throwing myself down on my bed I hid my face in the pillow.

Titus came up to me on tip-toe, and after a short silence said softly, in the tone of a man thunder-struck and almost in despair :—

“Oh ! dear, oh dear ! See what all this philosophy comes to. I wish it was all at the devil . . . by Jove ! . . .

XXIV.

Now began the darkest days of my life. I was growing afraid of myself ; afraid of yielding to that dissecting, analyzing impulse which I had hitherto blindly obeyed. I tried to restrain it by violent exercise and physical stupefaction, an expedient, however, that only answered so long as I was actually at work. I tramped about for days together and wandered over all the suburbs of Moscow, never getting home till late at night. My feet ached with weariness ; there were times when I felt utterly worn out ; nevertheless my eyes were burning and the fatigue soon passed away.

One day, as I crossed the bridge, I heard hurried footsteps behind me, and looking back saw Madame Sokolov. She was running quickly, with her hair in disorder, and her shawl awry. Observing that there was no one but myself on the bridge, I stopped, in some perplexity.

“Wait,” she said, panting for breath ; “here is a letter for you.”

I took the little note out of her hand. It was from Tonia, and consisted of a few words written in pencil :—

“Come to-morrow to the villa on the highroad. I ask you as a favor. It is very important for me.

TONIA.”

“All right !” I said.

Madame Sokolov, who by this time had regained her breath and straightened her shawl, made me a curtsy which at any other time would have set me off into a fit of laughing.

“All right,” she repeated, imitating me ; “have you no further commands ?”

I looked at her with hatred.

“I have nothing more to say.”

“Good gracious !” said Madame Sokolov, “how important ! . . . I daresay you imagine that I came tearing along here like a wild thing for your sake. Please don’t get that into your head. I didn’t.”

“I have never dared to hope . . .”

“The reason I did it was because otherwise Tonia would have come to you herself ; and I wanted to spare her that unpleasantness . . . because . . .”

"Thank you, Katerina Filippovna," I replied simply and with sudden sincerity.

This unexpected answer and the tone of it seemed to surprise Madame Sokolov. She looked at me for a few seconds with her small and ugly yet honest eyes, and turned sharply away.

"Bah ! there is no making you out. But it strikes me, young man, that you are giving yourself airs. . . ."

"I do not take upon myself to contradict you," said I, resuming the tones of delicate irony which vexed Madame Sokolov more than actual impertinence would have done.

"There ! why the deuce should I stand arguing with you ! If it was not that I am sorry for Tonia, I'd . . . Bah ! what fools we women are !"

I remained for a few minutes watching her ungainly figure as she went away, and repeating to myself her last words.

For some time past I had attended our students' meetings so seldom that I was hardly aware of the great change which had taken place in their tone. The purely student interest seemed to have receded into the background ; the discussions were less noisy and more logical ; the tone more serious. The juvenile excitement, vivacity, and enthusiasm

of former days appeared to be taking a broader and better defined course.

All this reached me as a muffled sound from afar, falling on my ear despite the other matters which occupied my mind. I had, however, been in some measure prepared for the new departure by the incoherent accounts of my friend Titus ; but the free discussion which I had heard affected me only as his own talk had affected me. I listened to them with a languid feeling of contemptuous indifference.

The villa to which Tonia invited me was some way off, on a road where there was little traffic. It was entirely covered with snow, and the footpaths were buried under the drifts. Most of the villas were boarded up, and only here and there a frozen window looked out into the desolation. Once in a way a sidepath turned to some garden gate and a light gleamed across the heaps of snow.

When I came to the villa formerly occupied by the General I stopped. On the balcony, between the pillars, where the old gentleman used to play at chess with Urmánov, the snow lay thick. There was not a single track to the house, which looked terribly bleak and cold, and only a single pine-tree hard by the wall beat one of its boughs against the window. I leaned on the fence, and for a long

while stood looking at this desolate, inhospitable dwelling.

Quite near, there shone through the trees, the lighted windows of a large villa, through which I could see a throng of dark shapes standing close together. I had but to turn my head, and, instead of the General's empty villa, I saw the lighted house where she was. The contrast awoke within me a strange feeling. From one side gazed on me memories filled with the cold of death ; on the other was a crowd of young life, and talk of life. And there, too, was she whom I both loved and feared. . . . I broke into a laugh. The fantastic idea occurred to me that the people in the large house were praying . . . perhaps to man, perhaps to idols, but still praying. . . . And yet the little villa was telling me that there is nothing in this world to pray to. . . .

I stood a long time, as it were, under some strange spell. At last, I tore myself away, and went slowly to the large house, stopping occasionally to look back.

The hall was hung round with overcoats ; and traces of snowy boots were visible on the floor. Some of the men had made seats of their coats and were talking in low voices. But most of them

were gathered in the large room. The air was full of smoke, the room faintly lighted with a single lamp ; and at first I could see only a mass of heads, all turned in the same direction—towards somebody who was reading aloud in a clear yet somewhat harsh and pedantic voice.

Before I had time to look round a young girl came forward from near one of the windows. She took me by the hand and whispered in my ear :—

“Why are you so late?”

I made no answer.

“Come here . . . as we used to.”

She led me through a side passage into the host's bedroom. Here sat only the Sokolovs and Chernov. Sokolov sat with folded hands, his rough, serious face turned towards the open door. As I entered, Madame Sokolov exchanged glances with Chernov, who moved nearer the door.

“Sit down here,” said Tonia. “Now, hush ! listen.”

We sat on a chest, as in the old days. Tonia seemed pleased at this ; but for a whole quarter of an hour she did not once turn towards me. A ray of light from the next room fell on her face, which wore a look expressive of intense and earnest attention. As I watched her eager eyes and parted lips,

I realized that this matter was for her not one of curiosity merely, but the turning-point of an important question. So I began to listen carefully to what was being read. But though I heard I found it amazingly difficult to understand. In addition to the thoughts which for some time past had occupied my mind there was room in it for Tonia. I could still think of her without much effort. I realized that I was sitting beside her ; everything else, however, was far away, and it gave me great trouble to piece together the separate ideas contained in the pamphlet which was being read.

It concerned the irredeemable debt of the educated classes to the people ; told how this debt must needs go on growing ; and insisted on the pressing necessity of a solution of the question. . . . The reading ceased. There was a slight rustle and some coughing in the room ; then silence. The whole company waited for one of the habitual orators to speak ; but the silence continued longer than usual.

Suddenly, to my great surprise, the voice of Titus broke the stillness :—

“Allow me, friends . . . I should like to read to you. . . . Zaitzev writes . . .”

He spoke so easily that I was amazed.

“No, no! we don’t want it,” interrupted several voices; “we know . . .”

“No; but why? Allow me.”

“You must let him have his say.”

“Well, but look here, friends, he is wandering from the point. . . .”

“Let the man have his say, then,” broke in the harsh voice of the reader; “but of course no sense will come of it; all the same, let him ring his chime out, and come down from the steeple!”

Titus found a marked place in the book, and read aloud a short quotation, then passed to the subject of the former reading. No one interrupted him. Besides our own set, there were in the room a number of Moscow students; and they took his part. I observed several attentive faces. It was, however, evident that no one could make out what the quotation from Zaitzev had to do with the matter under discussion; and many looked forward with interest to his explanation. But Titus’s speech was incoherent and incomprehensible. Why he quoted Zaitzev passed my comprehension; nevertheless, I did not find his observations utterly devoid of meaning. When he spoke of the people, I remembered our old Markelych, the corridor philosopher and veteran of the days of Nicholas, who

was bound to Titus by ties of mutual sympathy. But at the meeting there reigned quite a different ideal of the people ; it was the historical people, the people of folk-songs, the creators of the village commune. In addition to this, Titus got entangled in his talk ; and, fearing to be interrupted, hurried on, and became still worse confused.

“ There ! Shut up ! ” said somebody.

“ No, no ; let me finish ! ” cried Titus, in an injured tone.

The comparative ease with which he had spoken, and the attention of his audience, had slightly turned his head.

“ No, no ! We won’t have it ! Shut up ; we have had enough, ”

On this, the proceedings became uproarious. Titus shouted, but his voice was drowned in the increasing din. We could hear laughter, and, from the further corner, peculiar exclamations of the schoolboy sort.

“ Every time the same thing, ” said some one ; “ anybody would think he was doing it for fun ; he comes on purpose, just to obstruct, confound him ! ”

“ Why, good people, he doesn’t do it of his own accord, ” remarked the seminarist Rouchin, shrug-

ging his shoulders as he stood on the window-sill.
“Somebody else puts him up to it.”

Rouchin was a naive and excitable lad, who fell into a state of fanatical adoration of every new idea that was presented to his boyish gaze, and imagined that all the powers of darkness were at that moment collecting in arms to attack the villa among the snowdrifts and strangle the new world in its birth.

“What’s that? Who puts him to this? What nonsense!” resounded from all sides.

“No, it is true. And I know who it is—Gavrilov.”

My name rang out with startling suddenness. Several faces near the door turned to me. Tonia shuddered.

This startling charge produced at first deep silence, followed the next moment by a flood of talk. Some of the men expressed doubt; others defended me; the din became terrific.

“It is true,” broke in the harsh voice of Chernov, from our room, above the uproar, and he jumped up in his usual angular way, “he even sneaks into gardens, and peeps under win . . .”

Tonia, with a terrified and miserable face, started up hurriedly, and caught him by the arm,

“Hush! Hold your tongue; do you hear?” she said imperatively.

Chernov turned round and would have said something; but Madame Sokolov seized him, and forced him back into his seat.

“*Sit still* when you are told. What a nuisance you are!”

Chernov submitted.

Tonia turned to me with a white face; and I could read in her eyes an entreaty not to be angry.

“Come along,” she said softly.

“Why?” said I, looking straight into her eyes.

“I . . . I ask you, please.”

I rose. In an ante-room, I found her gray cloak, and held it for her. She put in one arm; then, in an embarrassed way, pulled the cloak away from me, and put it on herself. I would have helped Madame Sokolov too; but she simply snatched her cloak from my hands.

Tonia tied her shawl, and drew her hair from under her collar, then, when we were on the road, she hurried along nervously, slipping in the snow-drifts.

As we passed the General's villa, I again fixed my eyes on its dark windows, and glanced back at the big house.

“How stupid !” I involuntarily exclaimed.

Tonia walked on more rapidly ; but Madame Sokolov, who wore a summer hat, turned her head, towards me, and said sharply :—

“Well, what is there so very particular? . . . He cannot even hold his tongue, but must begin to whine. . . . Cannot you see that Tonia is not happy?” she added softly ; “you are a precious lot !”

XXV.

WHEN we had gone a little way Tonia slackened her pace, and Madame Sokolov went on before us.

“What on earth can have happened to Titus Ivanich?” said Madame Sokolov without turning round. “Deuce take it! He is just like a dog that has broken his chain. And he used to be so quiet.”

When Tonia fell behind, I was walking with her, and although we both were ill-at-ease, remained with her.

“I want to ask you,” she began gently, and then stopped.

“If you, too, are curious concerning Titus, I can tell you beforehand I know nothing. I have nothing to do with it. You believe me, I hope?”

“There is no need for you to tell me that,” said the girl simply. “I believe you incapable of it. Indeed, I . . . I myself have to ask your forgiveness.”

“There! As if *you* need to apologize,” Madame

Sokolov broke in again, without turning round ;
“too much honor.”

“Let us alone, Katia ! Go on in front, can't you ?”

Madame Sokolov walked on quickly ; and her ugly, angular figure disappeared in the darkness. Tonia walked with her head bent down.

“I wanted to ask you,” she began again, as if screwing up her courage, “what you think of all this ?”

“Of Titus's pranks ?”

“Why, no, no ! Of what Gribkov was reading. . . .”

“Ah ! Well, to tell you the truth, I didn't listen carefully. It isn't a bad pamphlet ; pretty fair. . . .”

“Is that all ?”

“What don't people write, Antonina Dimitrievna ? So many different things are written.”

“Look here, Gavrik,” she began, walking more slowly and lowering her voice, as though she expected that, being alone with her, I should become different ; “why do you always . . . why do you talk that way ? It is not your own self ; you know it is not you who speak thus.”

“Really, I don't know how to answer you. So far I feel as if I were myself ; but perhaps I may be mistaken.”

"You . . . you are laughing at me? . . . I don't quite understand."

"Not at all. A thing of this kind happened to me :—I knew, or imagined I knew, a certain person ; I even loved him ; and then, somehow, instead of him, I saw a heap of dirt. . . ."

"No," the girl interrupted, in a tone of distress ; "I don't understand at all. Did you read my letter?"

"I didn't read any letter."

"You didn't read my letter through?"

"I didn't *receive* any letter."

She sighed with relief.

"I wrote you a letter from Trzaritzyn. I asked you for your opinion. Well now, listen, Gavrik. . . . You see, I don't believe people when they say all those things about you. I don't even believe you yourself. I believe in the old Gavrik, that I . . . do you remember? . . . used to have so many long talks with . . . I have got into the habit of talking to you about things that I never talked about to any one else. I trusted you as myself ; even more than myself. And I trust you now ; only don't talk like that. . . . There, then, tell me, as you used to. . . . Indeed, I am not asking an idle question. Very much depends upon it. Our

whole lives may be different For heaven's sake, cannot you speak? "

I felt as though my heart would break, something within me was struggling painfully to get out, yet however hard I tried to give it expression, however hard I tried to recall those happy moments of which she reminded me I could not. Something shut them out of me.

"I don't remember anything," I said, setting my teeth. "However, as you like. . . I'll answer your question as well as I can. Look at that tree."

By the road stood an aspen. The dead leaves that remained on it stirred and rustled softly in the darkness.

"Tell those leave not to shake with the wind."

The girl, looking up at the tree-top, listened to me with painful attention.

"I don't understand," she said again.

"Men, as well as those dead leaves are ruled by the same laws."

"I know that."

"Oh! no; you don't know! Otherwise, you wouldn't dilute your knowledge with the water of idealistic impulses. Now, what is there that you can do, you, any more than that little worthless leaf? . . . You still believe in something."

"In something? Yes, I do."

I shrugged my shoulders.

"To what end? What can it do for you?"

"Wait a minute," she returned earnestly. "I am not in the habit of arguing; above all, with you. But wait a bit. You speak of law. Law consists in this: that there are strong people and weak, full and hungry . . . Yes?"

"I hope so."

"Don't be satirical. But if . . . if the full go, really go to the hungry and feed them, is not that law too? It is a law; and, moreover, a higher law."

"There, leave off," I interrupted with growing annoyance. "Who makes such laws as that for you?"

"Who? I don't know that, Gavrik."

"And I don't know. No one makes any laws whatever. There are neither higher nor lower laws; there is only one law; and even that is unconscious of its existence, because it is merely a soulless mathematical formula. . . . Do you understand? . . ."

"No. Even yet I don't understand. Wait a minute, Gavrik. . ."

"Ah. And you needn't understand. . . Heaven

only knows why we should stand still in the middle of the road. There, you see ; that's what all these speculations come to. Really you know we ought to go home ; it is where we sleep. And here we stand, without any reason, staring up into a tree. Well, of course, we shall stand until we are tired of it ; and after all we shall end in going home to bed. Because bed, dinner, and. . . well, something else too,—all that is law ; and abstract speculations and sky-gazing are simply whims and violations of law."

"Oh ! you don't know how it hurts me to hear you talk in this way."

On this I laughed maliciously. I wanted to say, that, perhaps, it hurt me still more ; but a harsh little observation came out instead :—

"I have nothing more agreeable to tell you."

At that very moment I was longing to take her by the hand and say something quite different. I was in the same mental condition as when I insulted Titus. Through my harsh words, through my cruel thoughts, I felt her dear presence and felt it approaching me in a halo of tenderness and love. And still I went on, expounding my sardonic theories, wondering, in fearful suspense, whether

my love would come fully out of the mist or . . . disappear forever . . .”

“Listen,” I said to her, softly and tenderly, and took her hand in mine.

She let it rest there, and stood waiting for me to speak.

I thought I was going to say that she must not believe me, that I had to ask her forgiveness, that I was ill. . . . That she as well as others might be mistaken; that even in errors there is life, yet in me there was no life and that I was too faulty myself to correct the faults of my fellow-creatures . . . that I adored her for still remembering the old Gavrik whom every one else had forgotten, and that she alone could restore him to life. . . .

My hand shook and I felt the agitated quivering of hers.

Suddenly, there rose before my eyes Madame Sokolov's ugly silhouette, and the question flashed through my mind:—Suppose Madame Sokolov was questioning you, instead of a girl with a fair tress, would your hand shake so and would you say to her what is now on your lips?

And with a trembling and sinking heart, I said, instead of what I wanted to say:—

“Why don't you cut off your hair?”

Her hand quivered violently.

“What . . . what did you say ? ” she asked terrified, and as if not believing her ears.

“Why don’t you cut off your hair, like hers, there ? ” and I nodded contemptuously in the direction of Madame Sokolov.

Tonia wrenched her hand from mine, and running up to Madame Sokolov took her by the arm, as though to embrace her friend and protect her from my insults at the same time.

“Come here ! ” she commanded me suddenly, “come here, I tell you ! ”

I went up to her. For a few seconds we all three stood silent in the dark road.

“No, nothing ! ” broke from her at last with a sigh, “I have nothing more to say to you. . . . But . . . how dare you insult Katia ? . . . ”

“There, there ! ” interrupted Madame Sokolov indifferently ; “as if it was worth while to speak of that ! Leave off, Tonia. . . . As for you, sir, I tell you plainly you had better say good-bye to your queen for ever. . . . And I am very glad of it,—anyhow she will do good work and not be wasting her time on you. . . . ”

She would have walked on ; but Tonia did not move.

“Don’t you dare—do you hear?—don’t you ever dare again, . . .” she began without listening to her friend ; “she is better, a thousand times better than you. . . . And yet I trusted you so, till now . . . still . . .”

There were tears in her voice, but repressing her emotion with an effort she drew herself up to her full height, and added :—

“And . . . and I . . . loved you so. . . .”

I bent my head. Again I was overwhelmed with pity for myself, as on the evening when I watched under her window, only this time the feeling was far more intense. I understood that if she now spoke of her love in my presence it was because, as regarded her, I had become as one dead, that she no longer saw in me the old Gavrik whom she had once loved. . . .

When I raised my head, the two women were both gone. I was alone on the dark road ; the dry leaves were fluttering on the trees, and the wind moaned high above my head a long wail of sorrow and regret.

I sank down helplessly on a heap of stones. It was as if something were gone out of me and something else was again expanding within me. I had recovered the power of sorrowing ; and I grieved for

myself, and because I was alone in the darkness. And now at last I could grieve for Urmánov, who had been, and whom now I could deeply pity ; and for Titus, whom I had repelled ; and for her whom I had insulted, and who had gone her lonely way without help, without hope, without love ; and I sorrowed for this too, that I could believe once more, and that the flower buried in dust, my love, had burst into full blossom in my soul. But faith was come and love had blossomed, too late ; for I should perish here alone in the darkness on a heap of cold stones. . . . And the darkness thickened about me : the wind moaned over my head, rising higher and higher ; then it died away and at last I heard it no moer.

.

Titus, still continuing his discussion with some of my fellow-students as they walked home in company, found me lying insensible on the road and carried me home. I was delirious and in a state of high fever. The last saying which I remember, as through a fog, was his despairing exclamation :—

“ Oh ! this philosophy ! See what it comes to ! May the devil take it for good and all ! I have had enough. . . . ”

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“ And the first face that I saw, when I awoke long afterwards, was my dear comrade’s.

He was sitting with his head resting on his hands ; and whispering his lecture over to himself softly, so as not to disturb me. I looked at him with the old feeling. How long it was since I had seen my Titus ! . . . Ah ! And the Titus that shouted at the students’ meetings ! . . . Or was that a dream ?

“ Titus ! ” I called. And when, beaming with delight, he came to my bedside on tip-toe, I asked :—“ Tell me ; is it true what happened to Urmánov, or did I dream it ? ” Titus, as he straightened my pillow, said, with ill-concealed terror :—

“ Don’t think about that ; you will only fall ill again. ”

So then it was true ; but I knew that I should not fall ill again. For even as he spoke, a sense of quiet sadness flooded my soul, it was a feeling to which I had been so long a stranger ! . . .

Another question arose in my mind. It made me still more sorrowful ; but now I was afraid, terribly afraid that it would prove to be a dream.

“ And . . . Tonia ? ”

Titus was silent.

“She went away? Is it true?”

“She left here the next morning.”

I sighed, with mingled sorrow and relief. Then, after all, my love and her confession were not a dream. . . . Neither is it a dream that I repulsed her, insulted her, and that she, too, had left me, although the last to do so.

“You don’t know where she is gone? You told her of my illness . . . and still, she . . .”

“I did not find her. . . . And where she is gone I don’t know ; and, so far, no one knows.”

“I know.”

Titus again looked at me in terror.

“No ; don’t be frightened, Titushka ; I really know. I might have held her back that evening, . . . but, you see. . . . By-the-bye, look in my coat ; there ought to be a letter.”

Titus thought that I was rambling. I confess that I too was half afraid as I watched him. What if the idea of the letter were really only a continuation of my delirium ?

But when Titus put his hand into the pocket of my coat, he found an unopened letter, to his great surprise, the same which the porter gave me as I was going in to Byelichka’s lecture. I had thought then it was from my friend in the country.

It was from Tonia.

“Open it and read it,” I said to Titus, motioning him to sit down beside me.

Titus sat down and began to read in a timidly hesitating voice, which seemed to make the letter still dearer to me.

The contents of the letter were almost childishly naive. The girl told me her impressions and her new ideas about herself, about us all, and about the people which had come into her mind. When I took the little sheet of paper in my hand and looked at it, all the tenderness and the hope of the old days breathed on me once more. The letter ended with the request that I would meet her at the station on a day which she named. She wanted to talk over everything with me before speaking to anybody else, and to ask my advice as to how she ought to shape her life.

“You know I am an orphan ; I have no one belongiug to me in the world.” Thus ended the letter ; and I felt that in these half-jesting words the girl had made to me a shy half-confession. . . .

A few grammatical mistakes looked innocently at me out of the letter. And this child is putting forth her feeble hands to stop the tremendous

wheel of life. . . . What a mistake, and yet, what truth and earnest faith. . . .

She appealed to me to help her to decide, . . .
And I. . . . What have I done? Instead of showing her the mistake in the form, I tried to tear up by the roots her faith in that in which if we would live we must believe.

And she is gone her way. . . alone. . . .

I fell into deep thought and my eyes filled with tears. But they were tears of joy as well as of grief. In thought I can again wander freely over the world. Somewhere in its wide expanse my love is lost to ken among unknown dangers. But now I can go in search of her. And when I find her I shall dare to meet her eyes, to fight for her, and even to fight against her. . . .

Because now I have faith; first of all in her, next in humanity. . . . And beyond these glimmers the dawn of still other faiths.

And this is the golden cloud of a new mood; into whatever shape it may unfold my heart tells me that at least it will be life.

IN BAD SOCIETY.

IN BAD SOCIETY.

FROM THE CHILDISH RECOLLECTIONS OF A
FRIEND OF MINE.

I.

A CASTLE IN RUINS.

AFTER the death of my mother, who died when I was six years old, my father seemed to become utterly oblivious to my existence. He fondled and caressed my little sister because she reminded him of her whom he had lost. But I grew up as neglected and uncared-for as a wild tree of the forest. Nobody looked after me; on the other hand, nobody interfered in my boyish freedom. I was left to do as I liked and go whither I would.

The little place where we lived was called Prince's Town. It belonged to a poor yet proud Polish family of princely rank, in this respect

resembling most other small towns in the southwest corner of Russia, where side by side with the monotonous everyday life of the toiling masses and the feverish bustle of petty, money-grubbing Jewish traders, the grandeur of the ancient magnates of the land is slowly decaying.

If you approach the town from the east, the first object to attract your attention will be the prison. It is the principal building and chief ornament of the place. The town proper, which lies a little way off, and on a lower level than this portentous edifice, in the neighborhood of two greenish stagnant meres, appears to have sunk into a deathlike sleep. Thitherward slopes gently, through green fields, a macadamized road, barred in the middle by the usual turnpike. A blear-eyed cripple, whose stolid face is burnt brick-red by continual exposure to the sun, looses the rope which holds the gate, and you are in the town—although you may not at first realize the fact, so little is it like a town. Gray fences of weatherbeaten boards—waste lands encumbered with rubbish heaps—and here and there a miserable mole-eyed cottar half sunk into the ground. Further on is a great straggling marketplace, surrounded by gloomy, wide-mouthed Jewish drinking-dens, while gaunt government offices,

white-walled, slab-sided and of barrack-like architecture, offend the eye with their unspeakable ugliness. The wooden bridge which bestrides the wretched river groans and squeaks under your carriage like a wayworn old man under a heavy burden. Beyond the bridge is the Jewish quarter, with its shops, warehouses, hucksters' stands, bakers' sheds and money-changers' stalls, whose owners sit on the pavement, half-hidden under huge umbrellas. For the rest, more evil smells than could be counted in Cologne, and a crowd of small children wriggling like eels in the mud.

A few minutes more and the town is behind you. The birch-trees are whispering gently over the graves in the churchyard, the wind is swaying with rhythmic movements the illimitable sea of verdant green, and singing its monotonous melody in the wires of the telegraph poles which stand spectre-like in the road.

The river which flows under the aforesaid bridge rises in one of the meres and runs into the other, so that to the north and south-west the town is bounded by marshes and streaks of water. The meres become shallower every year, and are overgrown with tall and thick reeds, which rustle and wave like an enormous jungle. In the middle of

one of these meres is an island, and on the island a ruined castle.

I remember with what superstitious dread I used to look upon this tumbledown old building. Stories, each more awesome than the other, were whispered about it among the townsfolk. The legend ran that the island was the work of men's hands—made by the Turkish prisoners of Polish nobles.

“The castle is built on dead men's bones,” old people were wont to say; and my frightened childish imagination pictured thousands of Turkish skeletons supporting with bony hands the island, and its tall poplars and tumbledown castle. These tales, and others of similar import, naturally invested the ruins with a nameless horror. Even on bright days, when cheered by the sunshine and the joyful chirruping of birds, we children seldom went near the castle without falling into a panic. The dark broken window-panes stared at us so stolidly, the sounds which came from the deserted rooms were so fearful and mysterious, that we would run away as fast as our little legs could carry us, afraid even to look round, and fancying we could hear behind us the trampling of skeleton feet and the shouting of ghostly voices.

And on stormy autumn nights, when the giant poplars waved and wailed in the fierce wind which rushed upon them from the marshes, the whole town would be in mortal terror.

“Lord, have mercy on us,” the Jews exclaimed fearfully ; the pious lighted candles before the ikons of the saints, and even a freethinking blacksmith, who disbelieved in the occult powers, made the sign of the cross as he entered his garden, and recited in a low voice a prayer for the souls of the unknown dead.

Whiteheaded old Yanush, who having no home of his own, had taken up his quarters in the castle cellar, assured us that on stormy nights he often distinctly heard cries and groans, deep down in the earth. The buried Turks were making a terrible uproar, howling, knocking their old bones together, and complaining of the cruelties which they had suffered at the hands of their Polish masters. And, as if in answer to these sounds from the nether world, the halls of the old castle echoed with the din of weapons and the harsh voices of nobles calling their men to arms.

Yanush protested that he had heard, amid the whistling of the tempest, the trampling of hoofs, the clang of steel, and words of command. The

old fellow even averred that he once saw the great grandfather of the present count, a noble renowned for his bloody exploits and evil life, ride on his charger right up to the castle gate, and curse with fearful oaths the noisy people below.

The descendants of this terrible Count no longer dwelt in their ancestral halls, and the greater part of the ancestral wealth had long since found its way to the hovels of the Jewish usurers over the bridge. Then, being unable to maintain their ancient state, they built for themselves a mean-looking house on a hill outside the town ; where in solemn and scornful isolation they spent their dull and pompous lives.

At long intervals the old Count, who was as great a ruin as his tumbledown castle, rode into the town on his old English horse. On these occasions he was invariably accompanied by the dry and majestic Countess, his daughter, a groom riding respectfully behind her. This grand lady was doomed to remain a spinster to the end of her days. All the eligible young nobles of the neighborhood had sold their ancestral seats to the Jews for building materials, and were scattered far and wide in search of middle-class heiresses, with whose fortunes they might recruit their own. No

young man of the town, however rich, would dare to raise his eyes to the stately Countess. When ever we children saw the old Count and his daughter pass by we fled like frightened birds and hid ourselves behind a hedge, whence we would gaze with wondering eyes at these strange people, who seemed to us to partake of the nature of ghosts.

West of the town, amid rotting crosses and sunken graves, stood the ruined chapel of the Uniates. This chapel had an intimate connection with the townspeople, who on their part had always been more or less at enmity with the lords of the castle. In times gone by its loud-mouthed bell had been wont to summon to their feudal duty stalwart workmen and thrifty burghers, all attired in neat though not costly tabards and armed with staves, nobles alone being allowed to carry warlike weapons. These humiliations, the memory of which still survived, had left a sore feeling in the mind of those by whose ancestors they had been endured.

From the chapel porch could be seen the island, and the great dark poplars by which it was surrounded. But the castle seemed to hide itself haughtily from its humble rival in an impenetrable mantle of verdure. Only when the wild west wind made a rift in the row of tall poplars, two or

three of the castle windows, frowning darkly towards the chapel, were for a moment made visible.

Now, both were corpses. The castle was now a sightless old fellow. So was the chapel. Its roof was broken, its walls were falling assunder, and the great bronze bell, whose clear notes once called the faithful to prayer, had been succeeded by a colony of owls which made night hideous with their ill-omened cries. But, curiously enough, the traditional feud between the aristocratic castle and the plebeian chapel still continued. It was carried on by the worms that nestled in their corpses—the poor and miserable who had taken up their abode in the cellars and sheltered corners of the respective ruins.

Only a few years previously the castle had served as free quarters for all comers. All for whom there was no place in the town—vagabonds, houseless wanderers, beggars, fugitives from justice, and the like—all these bent their steps towards the ruined castle sure of finding in it a refuge where they would run no other risk than the rather remote one of being crushed by a falling stone.

“To live in the castle” became an expression

which denoted the very extremity of want, destitution, and social degradation. Its old walls sheltered alike honest poverty and shameless rags, the broken clerk and the professional thief, the ruined drunkard and the deserted wife. But they repaid this easy hospitality with base ingratitude—tearing up the floors, breaking window-sashes, and gutting the castle generally, in order to provide fuel for the fires which they made nightly in the great hall and other parts of the building, to cook their food and dry their clothes.

Moreover, a time came when the vagabond dwellers among the ruins fell to quarrelling among themselves; whereupon old Yanush, who in the palmy days of the lords' castle occupied some subordinate post in their household, and had long been the unacknowledged chief of the ragged republic, assumed the office of dictator, and carried out a series of radical reforms. His measures (though supported by a strong party) being naturally opposed by those whose interests they affected, a veritable civil war broke out, and for several days the noise and confusion were so great that many a one thought that the imprisoned Turks had broken loose and were taking a terrible revenge on the ghosts of their cruel masters. In the end, how-

ever—thanks to the silent though substantial support of the local policemen—Yanush prevailed. The recusants were expelled, and peace reigned once more in the old castle.

The revolution was of a decidedly clerical and aristocratic character, the popular party being utterly worsted. Yanush allowed to remain in the castle only those whom he chose to consider “good Christians ;” that is to say Roman Catholics, most of whom, moreover, were either former servants of the Counts or their descendants—old men attired in the cast-off, utterly worn-out garments of gentility, with wrinkled faces, great dark-blue noses, and thick sticks ; ugly quarrelsome old women, who, albeit in the last stage of indigence, made a show of dressing like ladies. These creatures formed an exclusive aristocratic society and arrogated to themselves the monopoly of official beggary. On week-days they went from house to house begging, whining, complaining of their lot, and retailing scandalous gossip. On Sundays they were foremost among the privileged mendicants who press into church porches and receive the alms of the charitable.

When the struggle at the castle had been going on for some time, we children, attracted by the

hubbub, and curious to know what it was all about, went over to the island and hid ourselves behind the trunk of a huge poplar. We were just in time for the catastrophe. We saw Yanush at the head of a whole army of blue-nosed old men and vixenish women expel the last of the recusants. The sun was setting, and from a dark cloud over the tree-tops heavy drops were beginning to fall. Wretched human shapes, clothed in rags, frightened and miserable, wandered frantically about the island, trying like moles, to creep back furtively to their holes. But Yanush and his vixens, armed with sticks and pokers, were too many for them; and the policeman stood by, baton in hand, observing a neutrality which was evidently favorable to the victors.

The defeated had no choice but to clear out, and with drooping heads and hang-dog looks they shuffled over the bridge, leaving the island forever, and sank, one after the other, into the drizzly darkness of the fast falling night.

Thenceforth the castle and island lost, for me, all their fascination and charm. Beforetime I delighted to contemplate from a distance the gray walls and moss-grown roof of the ancient stronghold. When, at early morning, the queer inmates

crawled out, gaping, coughing, wheezing, crossing themselves, and turning their faces to the sun, I regarded them with a feeling akin to awe, as beings to whom appertained something of the mystery which surrounded the castle. They slept there and needs heard and saw all that befel on nights when the moon shone through the broken windows into the deserted rooms and the tempest raged about the broken turrets.

And I liked dearly to sit with Yanush, under the poplar-trees, listening to his garrulous talk, and devouring his stories of the bygone glories of the ruined house and its former owners. To my childish imagination these visions of the past appeared as real as the actual present, filling my heart with grave melancholy, and a vague sympathy with the life which those battered walls had witnessed. The gloom of sad memories swept over my soul as the cloud-shadows on a windy day sweep over the bright green of a freshly mown meadow.

But after the expulsion of the rebellious beggars my feelings towards the old castle and its historian entirely changed. On the morrow Yanush, meeting me near the island, asked me to pay him a visit, observing complacently that now even the

son of so respectable a father as mine might enter the castle without hesitation and in the full assurance that he would meet only good company. As he spoke, he took my hand and led me towards the gate, but when we got there I broke away from him and ran off, crying, the place had become hateful to me. The windows in the upper stories were boarded up, and the ground-floor was in possession of the vixens and their blue-nosed companions, who flattered me so outrageously, and looked so ugly, and abused each other so venomously, that I wondered greatly how the ferocious old Count, who so effectively silenced the rebellious Turks on stormy nights, could put up with the presence of these disreputable vagabonds. I could neither forget the cruelty which they had shown in expelling their former fellow-sufferers, nor think without pain of those wretched creatures, driven from their only shelter into the fast falling rain.

II.

DOUBTFUL PERSONS.

For several nights after the events described in the foregoing chapter the little town was in a state of great excitement ; the dogs barked, the doors creaked on their hinges, and the people were continually coming out of their houses and striking the walls with their sticks—by way of warning all whom it might concern that they were on their guard.

They knew that, creeping about the streets, were two or three score homeless wanderers, hungry, shivering and soaked with rain. The townsfolk being well aware that hungry waifs, who have nowhere to lay their heads, are apt to be desperate, and desperate men are often dangerous. Moreover, to make matters worse, the weather was about as bad as it well could be. The days were gray and gloomy, the nights moonless and cold ; the rain came down continually, the wind howled and raged, rocking the tree-tops, banging doors, shak-

ing shutters, and singing to me in my bed of homeless and houseless men.

But at last budding spring got the better of retreating winter ; the rain relented, the sun dried up the roads and fields, and the waifs disappeared. The dogs stopped their nocturnal barkings, people no longer thought it necessary to strike the walls with their sticks, and the town relapsed into its normal dulness. Then came the hot long summer days ; the sun, rolling through the sky vault, turned the dusty town into a furnace, sending the shrewd sons of Israel into their dirty hovels, while brokers on the look-out for business stretched themselves lazily on the ground and dozed with one eye open. Through the open windows of the government offices could be seen the clerks busily plying their pens, and stopping at frequent intervals to wipe their perspiring faces. In the early morning ladies went a-marketing basket in hand ; after the heat of the day they walked with their husbands, their long dresses trailing on the ground and leaving behind them a cloud of dust. The old men and women from the castle knocked softly at their benefactors' doors, so as not to disturb the general repose. For their right to live by begging was freely and generously recognized, and it seemed quite in the nature

of things that they should present themselves, Sunday after Sunday, at the church door asking for alms.

In short, the position of these vagrants in society was clearly defined, and they knew it.

But the unfortunates who had been expelled from the castle were still outcasts, they had no position in the society whatever,—as yet. True, they no longer roamed the streets by night ; and the rumor ran that these unfortunates had found a refuge near the old chapel in the mountain ; though precisely where, nobody could tell, any more than how they contrived to live. The only thing certain was that nearly every morning a number of grotesquely dressed, disreputable-looking individuals came from the direction of the mountain, and towards evening returned towards the same quarter. Their appearance had a disturbing effect on the drowsy quietude of the sleepy little town, where they seemed like black stains on an even gray background. The towns people eyed them askance, the outcasts returning their distrustful looks with inquisitive defiant glances ; for the vagabonds of the chapel did not in the least resemble the aristocratic beggars of the castle. Instead of flattering the townsfolk they abused them, liking better to live by their

wits and dexterity than to ask for charity and exist on alms. Their lives would have been easier if they had shown less independence, and among them were men whose intelligence and ability would have made them shining lights at the castle, where, moreover, they would have been gladly received. But they were unable to put up with castle society, and preferred that of the chapel. Some of the outcasts had evidently strange histories behind them, histories of tragedy and passion.

I shall never forget how the street used to ring with laughter when the sad stooping figure of the old "Professor" passed by. He was an inoffensive old fellow dressed in an ancient "dreadnought," and wearing a large hat with a protruding shade. His quasi-scientific title had probably been bestowed upon him because of a vague tradition that he was once tutor in a family of distinction. A more miserable looking being could hardly be imagined. He went through the streets with bent head and sullen gaze, the butt of all the idle rabble of the town, who having discovered his failings amused themselves cruelly at the poor old man's expense. Owing to some peculiar mental infirmity the Professor could be wound up like a clock, by no matter what question, when he would go on

talking and muttering almost interminably. It was the old man's other peculiarity, however, which most amused people. While he was thus mumbling and muttering, heedless whether he was listened to or not, somebody would suddenly shout "knives and scissors ! knives and scissors !"

The words acted like magic. The poor old man, to whom the mention of any lethal weapon was agony, would start as if he had been shot, and holding his hands to his side exclaim piteously—

"Right in the heart. . . . A spear in the heart !"

Whereupon his delighted audience would laugh still more heartily, and as he hurried away, repeat mockingly "knives and scissors ! knives and scissors !"

If, however, when the rabble were tormenting the poor old fellow, any of the outcasts from the chapel happened to be near he did not go unavenged, for to do them justice, they always stood by each other. Did Turkevitch or, better still, Jousailov chance to turn up, many of the victim's persecutors had to pay dearly for their amusement. Jousailov, a man of great stature and strength with a red nose and prominent eyes, was at war with every one who was better off than himself. Whenever he caught the Hebrew riff-raff playing tricks

on the Professor, or any other member of the community, he would rush at them like a whirlwind, smashing everything in his way, overthrowing their booths, trampling their wares in the mud, and knocking weak-bodied Israelites down by the dozen. In this way the valiant Jousailov began the anti-Jewish riots long before they assumed the serious proportions which they have since taken in South-West Russia. He tormented the Jews whom he took captive and shocked their wives by his improprieties. These exploits always ended in his being taken to the police station, whither he was dragged by the police sergeants after a fierce struggle in which both sides showed courage.

Another member of the community, whom the respectable townsfolk considered a legitimate object for persecution, was Lavrosky, a hopeless drunkard, once a Civil Service employé. Many remembered the time when he was a respectable neatly dressed young clerk, with a partiality for bright-hued silken neckties, and the sole support of his aged parents and his brothers and sisters. His ruin was due to the elopement of his betrothed, a rich hotel-keeper's daughter, with a smart captain of dragoons, who once spent a fortnight in the town. Shortly after this incident Lavrosky was dismissed from his post

for tippling, and eventually became a confirmed drunkard. He was a timid, wretched-looking little man, and when sober walked about the streets with his eyes glued to the ground as if overwhelmed with shame. Clad in rags, and with long unkempt hair and beard, he was just the figure to tempt people to run after him. It was considered a great joke to call out as he passed the name of the fair girl who had played him false and wrought his ruin. If he understood what they were saying his eyes sparkled, and he would rush furiously at the crowd, which thereupon quickly dispersed. But this seldom happened. As a rule, he heard nothing of what was going on around him; it was therefore no wonder that the crowd, exasperated by his insensibility took to throwing mud and stones at him.

When drunk, Lavrosky wept and talked. We children were fond of listening to his stories, although he made our flesh creep and our hair stand on end with his narration of horrible crimes which he said he had committed. According to his own account he had killed his father, brought his mother to the grave with grief, and murdered his brothers and sisters. We had no reason to disbelieve these awful confessions, though we were greatly puzzled by the fact that the poor man seemed to have had

several fathers ; one of whom he had pierced to the heart with a sword, burnt another over a slow fire, and thrown a third down a precipice. It was in vain that our elders laughed at us and told us that these stories existed only in Lavrosky's imagination; we sympathized with the grief that had so crushed the poor man, and by giving a liberal interpretation to his allegories we came nearer understanding the cause of his ruined life than some of our seniors.

Whenever we found Lavrosky asleep we looked searchingly into his face, watching how, even in his dreams, the shadow of his troubles passed over it ; his brow contracting, and his lips writhing with agony ; then he would suddenly shout "I'll kill you !" and we ran away in all directions.

Sometimes he got wet through with the rain and, in winter, almost buried in snow. He had to thank his fellow-outcasts, and especially the merry Turkevich, that the exposure did not kill him. Turkevich, even when he was hardly able to walk, would look for his friend, and when he had found him, wake him up and lead him to the mountains.

This Turkevich, as he himself said, was a man who would not stand being put upon. Whilst the Professor and Lavrosky suffered passively, Turkevich made the best of things and was nearly al-

ways merry and content. One of the first things he did was to make himself a general, without asking anybody's leave, and he insisted on being treated with all the respect due to the rank which he claimed. As nobody dared say him nay, Turkevich soon became persuaded that he had a perfect right to his imaginary title. He walked about with a soldierly step and sternly knit brows; and was ready to box any one's ears at a moment's notice—the right to which he considered to be one of the proudest privileges of his rank. If any doubt as to the validity of his grade occurred to him, he would stop the first man whom he met in the street and ask him sternly :—

“Who am I? Come! Tell me quickly!”

“General Turkevich,” the man would reply timidly, knowing that a different answer would lead to unpleasant consequences.

Turkevich looked more dignified still.

“All right. But mind you don't forget it!” he would say, releasing his prisoner. As Turkevich was very amusing and witty, knew many tricks and was full of anecdote, he always found listeners, some of whom were willing to stand him a glass in payment for his entertainment.

This was the secret of his almost unfailing good

humor. One glass of spirits suffice to make him happy for the remainder of the day; in fact, the General had imbibed so much brandy in his lifetime, that his blood was chiefly composed of that liquor: and by keeping the solution up to a certain strength, he was enabled to see everything through rose-colored glasses.

But, however, circumstances compelled the General to practise total abstinence for a few days, he became melancholy and cowardly, a state of things which enabled those whom he had offended to retaliate in kind. But to all their insults and jeers, he would answer only with hot tears and entreaties to be put out of his misery, as otherwise he would be sure to die like a dog in a ditch. In this cry there was a ring of despair that disarmed even his worst enemies, and, having no heart to hurt him, they left him alone. Then his mood would change, his face grow pale, his eyes glitter and become fiercely restless; he would start to his feet, as if in a trance, and hurry into the street shouting:—

“I am going! . . . Going like the prophet Jeremiah to denounce evil-doers.”

At this signal, even the busiest among the tradespeople left their work to follow in the train of the new prophet, and watch what they knew would

be an interesting sight. He generally went first to the house of the acting secretary of the local court, and got up before his windows a mock sitting of the tribunal, assigning the parts of plaintiff and defendant to various persons in the crowd. This preliminary arranged, he would begin to recite their parts, as well as his own, with great fluency, mimicking their voice and manners to the life. As he always introduced into his comedy some amusing allusions to current events, the entertainment was naturally a great success, and a maid-servant would presently come out of the secretary's house, slip something into Turkevich's hand, and then hurry away to avoid the unwelcome attentions of the General's followers. As he pocketed the tip, the General would laugh triumphantly, and hasten to spend it at the nearest public-house. He would next proceed to the houses of other victims, changing his repertoire according to circumstances, and as he received a fee for every performance, his voice grew more cheerful, and his face lost its gloom.

The performance usually ended at the police superintendent's, the meekest and most inoffensive official imaginable; but he had two weaknesses: he dyed his hair, and was supposed to be over fond of his fat cook.

On reaching the Ispravnik's house, Turkevich would wink knowingly at his companions, toss his hat in the air, and announce in a loud voice that here lived not their chief merely, but his (the General's) father and benefactor.

Then he would gaze fixedly at the house awaiting the issue, which was always somewhat doubtful. Sometimes the front door would open at once, and Matrena, the cook, hurry out, bringing a present from the "father and benefactor." At other times the latter's angry face, framed in jet-black hair, would appear at one of the windows, while Matrena, slipping out at the back door, ran to the police-station for the policeman, Mikita, who, by frequent practice, had become very clever at managing Turkevich, and the moment he saw the cook knew what was expected of him. Calmly putting away the boot he was mending, he would haste to fulfil his duty.

Meanwhile Turkevich, seeing that flattery was a failure, would become satirical, express regret that his benefactor daubed his gray hair with blacking, and reprove him for setting a bad example by allowing Matrena to occupy so equivocal a position in his household. At this point he would wax still more eloquent an abusive, knowing full well that

a friendly reception was now past hoping for. But his gabble on that occasion was soon stopped. Mikita, quietly approaching Turkevich from behind, would seize the orator in his powerful arms, hoist him on his shoulders, and carry his prisoner away amid the jeers and laughter of the crowd, who had taken good care not to warn Turkevich of his danger, and, the performance over, slowly dispersed.

In addition to the characters I have described, the chapel harbored a number of wretched outcasts who, it was said, made their living by petty thefts ; although the only foundation for the rumor was the fact that they had been deprived of all other means of subsistence by their rivals at the castle. It was for this reason that the appearance of these vagabonds in the town never failed to alarm the shopkeepers.

The captain of the band was one Tyburzy Drab, the strangest and most remarkable member of the society.

Tyburzy's origin was obscure, his identity uncertain. Romantic people thought he was of good family, and that, having disgraced himself in his youth, he had been obliged to take an alias. He was also said to have been a follower of the famous

brigand Karmeluk ; but for that he was hardly old enough.

He had rugged though expressive features, short sandy hair, which stood on end like the quills of the fretful porcupine, a prominent forehead, and a protruding lower jaw. Though he could distort his face out of recognition, and make most fearful grimaces, his glittering eyes, which showed malice and acuteness, were always the same.

Tyburzy was tall, and his bent shoulders seemed to tell a tale of misery and misfortune. His hands were hard and horny, his feet large, and his gait was that of a peasant. It was because of these peculiarities that most people refused to accept the theory of his aristocratic origin, saying that, at the best, he could only have been servant in some noble family.

To this supposition, however there was another objection—Tyburzy's great erudition. There was hardly a tavern in the town in which he had not recited entire orations of Cicero, or chapters of Xenophon, for the entertainment of the Ruthenian farmers, who came to town on market days.

The peasants would listen in open-mouthed astonishment while the ragged orator denounced the treachery of Catiline, or praised the exploits of

Cæsar. Ruthenians being endowed with lively imaginations, his hearers put their own meanings into these lively albeit incomprehensible speeches, and as Tyburzy, with tragically outstretched arms and glowing eyes, addressed them as *Patres conscripti*, they would nod their heads approvingly, and whisper to each other:—

“Deuce take him! What a talent for abuse the fellow has!”

And when, after such an exordium as this, he glared at them more fiercely than before, and began to declaim endless Latin sentences, his long-whiskered hearers followed him with rapt attention and intense sympathy. For it seemed to them that Tyburzy's spirit had soared to regions unknown, where unchristian tongues are spoken, and where, judging from his strange gestures and contorted countenance, the immortal part of him was undergoing bitter affliction. Their excitement reached its climax when, rolling his eyes until the whites of them only were visible, he intoned with hollow voice and energetic action, long passages from Virgil and Homer. It was more than they could stand. Unable to resist the combined influence of Tyburzy's eloquence and Jewish brandy, their heads would drop, and as their long hair fell on their faces, they would sob:—

“Oh, how well he does it; how pitiful he makes it, the scoundrel!” And tears would flow freely from their eyes, and deluge their abundant beards.

No wonder that when the orator, jumping from his tub, burst into a peal of merry laughter, the beclouded faces brightened up, and horny hands, diving into the pockets of baggy breeches, brought forth many coppers. Delighted with the happy ending of Tyburzy's flight into the unknown, they would kiss him fervently, entertain him liberally, and make him presents.

In view of these surprising displays of learning and histrionic talent, it became necessary to start a theory which should fit in with the facts, and afford an adequate explanation of the man's past. The new theory was to the effect that, in his youth Tyburzy had been the serf of a Count, and was by him sent to the Jesuit Father's school with his son as the latter's servant, and that somehow or other, the serf had contrived to learn everything, while the young Count had learnt nothing.

Among other consequences of Tyburzy's mysterious learning was the ascription to him of a deep knowledge of occult things. Did the sorcerer's sign appear in the growing grain nobody could

pluck it off with less danger to himself and the reapers than Tyburzy. Did a portentous owl perch for several consecutive evenings on somebody's roof-tree, thereby endangering the life of one or other of those who dwelt there, Tyburzy would be sent for to drive away the ill-omened bird by conjurations drawn from the pages of Titus Livius.

Another mystery related to Tyburzy's children, or rather, the children who lived with him. Were they his or some other body's. One was a boy of seven, tall and well grown for his age. This child had been with Tyburzy from the first; he came into the neighborhood carrying him in his arms. The other was a little girl whom he had afterwards fetched—nobody knew from where, and as she had not been seen for a long time nobody knew what was become of her. The boy was dark, his name Valek, and he had a way of walking sullenly about the streets with his hands in his pockets and looking round in a way which made cautious bakers keep a sharp eye on their loaves and cakes.

At times there was much talk in the town about the vaults under the ruined chapel, the like of which are to be found under most of the churches built in the turbulent times of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when they were used as places of refuge.

It was thought that the outcasts lived there ; for they always made off thitherward at nightfall. Yet nobody could tell for certain, no man being bold enough to follow them. The mountain, which was covered with old graves, had an evil reputation. On dark autumnal nights, blue lights might be seen moving about in the chapel yard, and the owls in the ruined belfry hooted so fearfully that even the bold unbelieving blacksmith felt ill at ease.

III.

MY FATHER AND I.

“It is bad, very bad, young sir,” old Yanush, the steward of the castle, would say reproachfully, wagging his white beard, when he chanced to meet me in the street, following Turkevich or Tyburzy.

“It is bad, young sir, very bad indeed. You are in bad society. I pity your honorable father.”

The truth was that since my mother's death my father's grave face had grown so much sterner, and his manner so forbidding that home had no attraction for me. In summer I was out all day long. On returning at night I crept furtively through the garden, like a young wolf, desirous above all things to avoid meeting my father.

My room was on the first floor, the window of it being hidden by the thick leaves of a lilac-tree. I could open the window from the outside by means of a special contrivance of my own inven-

tion. Generally, I went straight to bed, but when I found my little sister awake—she slept in the next room—we would kiss each other and play together for a while, taking care, however, not to disturb the grumbling old nurse.

I rose with the sun, and day had hardly broken when my trail was marked on the long dew-laden grass of the garden. Climbing the fence I would make for the mere, where a number of fellow-scapegraces were waiting for me to go a-fishing, or to the water mill to watch the drowsy miller open the locks and let in the crystal water, which shivering sensitively would rush into the sluices and begin cheerfully its daily work.

The great wooden wheels, roused by the noisy splashes of the water, shivered in sympathy and began to move lazily and reluctantly, as if they had been wakened too soon. To the big wheels followed the main shafts with a grave steady movement, setting in motion the pinions and spur wheels which made a great clatter ; then the grindstones went round wheezing, and the white flour dust rose in clouds from the clefts in the wooden walls of the crazy old mill.

Often, I went further a-field. It pleased me to watch the awakening of Nature. I was glad

when I chanced to start a drowsy lark, or rouse from its form some timid hare.

Drops of dew fell from the waving grass and the corollas of wild flowers as I wend towards a little grove on the eastern outskirts of the town. The trees greet me with light drowsy whispers. As I pass the prison the pale gloomy faces of the convicts appear at the grated windows, the watch, shouldering their muskets, make the round of the walls, and relieve the worn-out sentinels of the night.

Though I have been rambling about for some time, the townsfolk are not yet up ; and at every turn I see sleepy, half-dressed figures, opening their shutters. But soon the sun shows above the mountains, a brass-throated bell calling up the collegians is heard from the other side of the mere, and hunger reminds me that it is time to return home to breakfast.

So many people called me a vagabond and thought and spoke ill of me that I ended in believing all they said. So did my father, and after a while made several attempts to correct my supposed evil propensities and give more care to my education, but always unsuccessfully. At the sight of that stern and gloomy face, bearing the stamp of

incurable grief, I became shy and reserved, and I stood silently before him, fingering my buttons and looking timidly about me.

There were times when I felt differently, when I yearned for sympathy, and wished that he would put his arms round me, take me on his knee lay my head on his shoulder and weep with me over our common loss. But he would gaze at me vaguely, as if his thoughts were far away; and then, sorrowful and hurt, I would shrink within myself, chilled by that incomprehensible look.

“Do you remember your mother?” he would ask.

Did I remember her! Ah, how well. I remembered long ago when I wakened in the night, seeking in the darkness her soft hands, pressing them to my face and covering them with kisses. I remembered when, sick and weary and wellnigh worn out, she sat before the open window looking on the beauties of the glad spring-time, which she loved so well and knew she should never see again.

Ah yes, I remembered her! . . . When covered with flowers, young and beautiful, she lay with the seal of the Destroyer on her pale brow, I crouched like a little wounded animal in a dark corner, watching her with bloodshot eyes which looked for the first time on the horror of death.

And then, after a crowd of strangers had carried her away, did not my smothered sobs break the silence of the first night of my bereavement.

Ah yes, I remembered her ! Even now I often waken up at dead of night, full of childish love and tenderness, longing for sympathy, a happy smile on my lips, in the blessed unconsciousness left by the rose-colored dreams of infancy.

And often it seems to me, as in times gone by, that she is still with me, and I stretch out my arms and wait for her fond embrace. But they find only emptiness and gloom ; the sense of my loneliness cuts me to the soul. I press my hands to my beating heart and burning tears of boyish grief rain on my pillow.

Ah yes, I remembered her ! . . . But to the question of that tall melancholy man, whom I knew but could not feel to be my father, I could answer only with a blush, drooping eyes, and silence. He turned his head away with a gesture of pain and annoyance, and I withdrew my little hand from his unsympathizing grip

He felt that he had no hold over me, that we were antipathetic and that between me and him were an unpassable barrier. When she was alive he loved her so dearly and was so absorbed in his

own happiness that he hardly ever noticed her boy. Now his great grief blinded him and alienated me.

As time went on the abyss which separated us seemed to grow deeper and wider. My father became more and more convinced that I was a bad boy with an empty head and a selfish heart, and the consciousness that he ought to train me up but could not, ought to love me but did not, served only to intensify his irritation and increase his aversion for me. I knew it.

While hidden behind a bush I used to watch him, as with bent head he strode up and down the avenue plunged in gloomy thoughts. At these times I pitied him deeply. Once—it was the anniversary of our mother's death—he sat down on a bench, and pressing his head between his hands, sobbed passionately. It was more than I could bear. I rushed from my hiding-place and would have tried to comfort him. But suppressing his emotion with a great effort he eyed me sternly and coldly.

“What do you want?” he asked.

I wanted nothing. Ashamed of the impulse to which I had yielded I turned aside, fearing that my father would read my feelings in my face. Then,

running away to the darkest corner of the garden, I buried my face in the grass and wept bitter tears of anger and pain. At seven years old I had felt all the bitterness of solitude.

My sister Sonia was in her fifth year. We loved each other dearly. But the accepted view of my character, the belief that I was a little ne'er-do-weel, often deprived me of the solace of her company. Whenever I began to play with her, noisily and merrily as children do, the drowsy old nurse who with her eyes half closed was always dressing hens' feathers for cushions, would straightway waken up, give me an angry look, take Sonia in her arms and hurry off. At these times the old body reminded me of a brooding hen, defending her chickens from a vulture, the vulture being, of course, myself.

All this was very stupid and annoying, and in the end I gave up my well-meant attempts to amuse Sonia with my objectionable playing. After a while I became—not home-sick but sick of home, where nobody showed me the least sympathy. I was weary of the grumbling of the old nurse, of the idle whispering of the apple-trees in our garden, of the dull clatter of pans in the kitchen, and knives mincing meat.

So it came to pass that I spent nearly all my time time out-of-doors ; a habit which brought me into still worse repute, and I was looked upon as being no better than a street boy and a vagabond. But I was so much accustomed to abuse and reviling, that I heeded them no more than a passing shower of rain, or any other freak of the weather. I listened in silence and went on as before.

Wandering about the streets and roads, I observed with childish curiosity the simple life of the country folk. I listened excitedly to the hum of the telegraph wires by the wayside and wondered what they were saying. I thought I could hear the voice of men in the whispering of the grass on the hillsides, sacred to the memory of the ancient defenders of the land. Often I was painfully affected by the glimpses I obtained of the drama of human life, for I had come to know many things which are usually hidden from children much older than myself.

When the vixens at the castle had shorn it of its former halo of romance, and every nook in the town had become as familiar to me as the lines on my hand, I began to cast wistful glances towards the ruined chapel, whose crumbling walls were faintly visible in the mountains. After a while I ventured

to reconnoitre it from various points of view, and at a respectful distance, for the mountain was supposed to be haunted and had a bad name. But as I saw nothing more alarming than quiet graves and broken crosses, I grew bolder, and drawing nearer made a closer inspection. Nowhere could I detect a sign of human presence. All was peace, and the place looked as calm as a summer's day. Only the chapel, with its unglazed windows and drooping moss-grown roof seemed sad and pensive, as if it had something on its mind. And now I longed to look inside and see whether it contained aught but dust and was as peaceful as it looked. Yet I lacked the courage to undertake alone so daring an enterprise. Moreover, I could not very well get inside without help. So I engaged a small bodyguard of three streetboys to accompany me, tempting them with offers of apples from my father's garden.

IV.

I MAKE A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

WE set out on our journey one afternoon, and reaching the foot of the mountain without misadventure began the ascent of its steep sides, by one of the ravines, made partly by the rain, partly by the spades of people who had once dug clay there. As we go up we see, here and there, white bones protruding from the earth. In one place the corner of a coffin is distinctly visible. In another a human skull grins at us a ghastly smile and fixes us with his black eyeholes.

At length, keeping well together and giving each other an occasional leg up, we reached the edge of the last ravine, and presently find ourselves on the mountain top.

The sun was beginning to set. His oblique rays shone brightly on the green sward of the old cemetery, and illumined with rainbow-like colors the few remaining windows of the ruined chapel. Deepest silence prevailed, and perfect peace and quiet-

ness brooded over the deserted churchyard. Nowhere could be seen bones or skulls or other relics of mortality. The fresh green grass hid from us lovingly in its soft embrace the horror and ugliness of death.

We were alone. Only sparrows were chirping merrily around, while swallows flew in and out of the chapel windows.

“There is not a soul about the place ;” said one of my companions.

“The sun is going down ;” observed another, pointing to the “ruler of the day,” who was dipping towards the edge of mountain.

It was evident that if we were to go inside we had no time to lose. But the chapel door was nailed up, and the windows were above our heads. Nevertheless it seemed possible, by standing on each other’s shoulders, to reach one of them and look inside.

“Shall we try ?” I asked.

“No, let us go home,” quavered one of my comrades, who, now that it was come to the point, had lost his courage.

“Go if you like, you coward,” exclaimed the eldest of our little band. And with that he offered me his back.

Willingly accepting his help, I climbed boldly up, and stood on his shoulders. From this point of vantage I could easily reach the window, and, having tested its solidity, I raised myself up, and, holding on by one of the sides, sat down on the sill.

“Well what do you see?” asked my comrades excitedly, as they stared up at me open-mouthed.

I was silent. Leaning forward I gazed intently at the majestic ruins. The walls of the high, narrow temple were quite bare and devoid of ornament. The rays of the setting sun, streaming in through the open windows, painted with golden arabesques the dilapidated walls. I could see the inner side of the great nailed door, the ruined gallery, and the old wooden columns, which seemed to totter under their heavy burden. The corners were covered with cobwebs and filled with the strange darkness which so often nestles in old buildings. The height from the window to the floor appeared to be much greater than from the window to the ground outside. It seemed as if I were looking into a deep pit, and for some time I could not distinguish the strange objects which cumbered the floor.

Meanwhile my companions, tired of waiting for

my revelations, hoisted to the window one of the three. I gave him a hand up, and he took his place beside me.

“That is the altar,” he said, pointing to a nondescript object under our feet.

“And that must be the church lustre,” said I.

“And see! the little pulpit for the Gospel.”

“But what can that be—on the floor, there?”

“The priest’s hat, of course.”

“No; it is a pail.”

“Nonsense! They don’t have pails in churches.”

“It might be to keep coal in for the censer.”

“I am sure it is a hat. Anyhow, we can go and look. See, I will fasten the straps to the window sash and let you down. What do you say?”

“Thank you very much. Not if I know it. Go yourself!”

“Do you think I dare not?”

Without waiting for an answer I tied my two straps firmly together, passed them round the sash, and giving one end to my friend let myself slowly down, hand under hand. As my feet neared the floor I gave an involuntary shiver, but a sympathetic nod from my companion, who was looking down from the window, restored my courage, and I dropped lightly on the rotten boards. The sound

of my footsteps roused a ghostly echo which, after reverberating in the depths below, died away in the dark corners of the chapel. Several sparrows that were perched on the gallery took wing and flew through the windows.

Glancing upward, I saw looking down on me from above the altar, a stern bearded face and a head crowned with thorns. It was the figure of Christ on the great crucifix.

I was deeply awed and not a little afraid, but being under the eye of my companion, and as those outside were impatiently awaiting the issue of the adventure, I felt that I must stand to my guns.

“Will you go on?” he asked.

“Of course I will,” I said, putting a bold face on it and speaking a good deal more confidently than I felt. “Of course I will.”

But the very same instant something happened which made my blood run cold in my veins and my courage run out at my finger ends. First of all, a noise in the gallery, as of falling plaster, followed by a cloud of dust, and a great gray creature with huge wings, that darkened the air, hovered for a moment over my head, and then flew through a hole in the roof.

“Help me up! Help me up!” I shouted to my comrade.

"There is nothing to be afraid of; it is only an owl," he said soothingly.

All the same he began to haul at the straps. but before I had reached the window, his face became distorted as with sudden fear, he uttered an ear-splitting shriek, the strap slipped from his hands, and as I dropped back on the floor he disappeared from the window.

Looking round I discerned the cause of my friend's alarm. It was certainly very uncanny, though at the moment it struck me as being more curious than terrifying.

The thing we had been talking about, which he had taken for a pail and I for a hat, but which proved to be a pot, was moving, and even while I looked at it vanished under the altar, drawn thither by a small childish hand whose vague outline I could just distinguish.

What I felt it were hard to say. Unquestionably I was badly frightened; but it was not ordinary fear. It seemed to me that I had got into another world—probably the nether world. From the outside world, which I had just left and whither I saw no way of returning, I heard for a few moments the hurried trample of retreating footsteps. But soon all was still. I was alone, as in a tomb, amid things strange, weird, and ghostlike.

Time appeared to stand still, which was probably the reason why I could not tell how long I had been standing, transfixed to the floor, when I heard the suppressed whispering of what sounded like human voices.

“Why does not he go back?”

“Don’t you see? He is frightened.”

The first voice seemed to be that of a little child, the other, the voice of a boy of my own age; and I fancied that I saw a pair of dark eyes gleaming through a cleft in the old altar.

“What will he do next?” asked the first voice.

“That is what we shall see,” answered the other.

Then there was a sound of rustling under the altar, which appeared to move a little, and the next moment there emerged from it a human figure.

It was the figure of a boy of some nine years old, but taller than I, and spare and slim, like a reed. He wore a dirty shirt and short trousers, in the pockets of which he kept his hands, and dark crisp hair hung like a crown over his black pensive eyes.

Albeit the youngster who appeared on the scene so strangely and in such questionable guise, walked up to me in that pugnacious and provoking manner

which among street boys is generally regarded as equivalent to a declaration of war, I felt greatly relieved; and when there emerged from the hole under the altar another dirty little face, framed in flaxen curls, and lighted up with a pair of sky-blue eyes, all my courage returned and Richard was himself again. I moved a step from the wall and, according to the knightly etiquette of the streets, also put my hands in my pockets. This meant that I was not only not afraid of my adversary but even felt a little contempt for him.

We stood face to face, regarding each other defiantly.

"Why are you come here?" asked the boy, after he had scanned me from head to foot.

"Because? . . . What is it to you?" I answered. My adversary, raising his left shoulder, turned towards me sideways, and drew from his pocket his clenched fist.

I did not flinch.

"I will show you what it is to me," he said menacingly.

"All right! Try!" I exclaimed, putting myself in an attitude of defence.

It was a critical moment, for on our present conduct depended our future relations. But my

man, though he continued to look at me defiantly, did not come on.

"Oh, I know how to fight," I said, though in a more conciliatory tone than before.

Meanwhile the girl, having emerged entirely from the hole, came forward trembling, and clasping the boy's knees regarded me with surprised and frightened eye.

This decided the issue of the unequal contest. It was obvious that a boy so encumbered would fight under great disadvantage, and I was too generous to profit by his difficulty.

"What is your name?" he asked, as he toyed with the girl's flaxen curls.

"Vasio, and yours?"

"Valek, I know you. You live in the house over the mere. You have big apples."

"You are right : and they are both big and good. Will you try one?"

I took from my pocket two of the apples, with which I had intended to reward my runaway army, and offered it to Valek, the other to the girl.

"She is afraid," he explained, and taking one of the apples put it into the child's hand.

"Why are you come here?" he asked again.

"Do I ever come into your garden?"

You may ; I shall be glad to see you," I said cordially.

This reply seemed to surprise Valek greatly. "I am not fit company for the like of you," he returned sadly.

There was something in his manner and the despondent tone of his voice which grieved me.

"Why?" I demanded.

"Your father is a judge."

"What of that" quoth I, with unaffected surprise. "What of that? it is me you will play with, not my father."

Valek shook his head.

"Tyburzy won't let me come," he said ; and then, as if the mention of this name reminded him of something he had forgotten, added hurriedly, "Look here ! you are a good lad, but you had better go. If Tyburzy finds you here it will be bad for you."

I was of the same opinion. At any rate, I felt that it was quite time for me to go. The sun was setting and I had a longish walk before me.

"But how am I to get out?"

"I will show you the way. We will go together."

"And she?" I asked, pointing to the girl.

“Marusia? Oh, she shall go with us.”

“Here! Through the window?”

Valek thought for a minute.

“No. This is what we must do. I will help you through the window and we will go another way.

No sooner said than done. With the help of my new friend I climbed up to the window. Then, passing my straps round the sash and holding both ends in my hands, I descended a few feet, when letting one end go I dropped the remainder of the distance and landed safely on the grass, where I found Valek and Marusia waiting for me hand in hand, for the girl required help.

By this time the sun was out of sight and the town shrouded in a mist of violet shadows. Only the tops of the tall poplars on the island were shining like gold, richly dipt with the last rays of the declining sun, now hidden from us by the mountain.

It seemed to me that I had been there a long time; and that at least a day had passed since I entered the old churchyard.

“How nice it is here!” I exclaimed, filling my lungs with the fresh evening air.

“It is so lonesome,” observed Valek sadly.

"Do you live up here?" I inquired as we began our descent of the mountain.

"Yes."

"And where is your house?"

I was unable to realize that children like myself could live elsewhere than in a house.

Valek smiled his usual pensive smile, but answered nothing.

We did not go down the mountain by the ravines, up which my companions and myself had climbed with so much difficulty. Valek knew a better way. After passing the thicket of reeds which grew on the dried-up marsh, we crossed the stream by a fragile plank bridge and so reached the outskirts of the town.

Here we had to part company. I shook hands with my new friend. The girl also proffered her tiny hand, and looking up at me, said:—

"Will you come to us again?"

"Yes—certainly—by all means—if you wish it," I answered.

"Well, come—if you please," Valek observed, after a moment's thought. "But you must choose your time—come only when you know that our people are in the town."

"What people? Who do you mean?"

“All of them—Tyburzy, Lavrosky, Turkevich, the Professor. But never mind about the Professor, no fear of him disturbing us.”

“Very well. I will make a round of inspection, and when I find they are all in the town I’ll look you up. And now, farewell.”

“Look here ;” shouted Valek, when I had gone a few steps. “Look here ; You won’t blab about what you saw up there ?”

“You may trust me. I won’t tell a soul,” I answered resolutely. “Good ! And say to those fools who came with you—if, as they are sure to do, they pester you with questions—say that you have seen Old Nick.”

“Certainly.”

“Now, good-bye !”

“Good-bye.”

It was dark when I got to our garden fence, over which, when I came home late, I generally climbed. The sickle-shaped moon hung over the earth, and the stars shone brightly in the purple sky. All was still, the coast appeared to be clear, and I was on the point of getting over the fence, when somebody seized me by the hand.

“Vasio, dear Vasio ! You are alive and safely back ! I am so glad,” whispered excitedly one of my fugitive comrades.

“Well, you may be. But I was not glad when you ran away and left me.”

He cast down his eyes ; but curiosity getting the better of shame, he put the question which he was dying to ask :—

“Well, now you are alive, tell me what it was?”

“What was it?” I said, mimicking him. And then in a tone which admitted of no doubt, I added : “It was the devil, of course, and you are all cowards.”

And without vouchsafing any further explanation, I went my way.

Twenty minutes later, I was fast asleep.

In my dreams that night, I really saw a number of little black devils hopping briskly out of the hole under the altar, while Valek, armed with a willow wand, chased them round and round, thereby greatly amusing Marusia, who laughed merrily at the sport and clapped her hands in childish glee.

V.

THE ACQUAINTANCE IS IMPROVED.

My newly made friends quite absorbed me. My last thought when I went to bed at night, my first thought when I woke up in the morning were of my memorable visit to the lone chapel on the mountain. I rambled about the town with the sole object of ascertaining the whereabouts of the outcast community. If Lavrosky lay stretched in the mud, if Turkevich and Tyburzy were brawling at some street corner or tippling in some tavern, and suspicious-looking ruffians prowling about the marketplace, I ran across the marsh, and made in all haste for the mountain—having first filled my pockets with my father's apples and sweets, which I had saved up for the children of the chapel.

Valek, a staid, serious boy, who dominated me with his gravity and "grown-up" ways, received these presents simply and carelessly—usually putting them aside for his little sister. But Marusia's

face always kindled with unrestrained joy, her pale cheeks glowed, and she made our hearts merry with the peals of her childish laughter.

She was a wee, white-faced creature, and reminded one of a flower which has grown up without sunshine. Though nearly five years old, she walked with difficulty, tottering on her crooked feet like a blade of grass shaking in the wind. Her tiny hands were thin and transparent; her head oscillated on her little shoulders like the corolla of a blue-bell; yet, there were times when Marusia's eyes bespoke an unchildish gravity, and her smile recalled my mother's in her last illness, when she sat before the open window.

I involuntarily compared Marusia with my sister. There was little difference in their years, but Sonia was fat, plump, and elastic, like an india-rubber ball. She was fond of running and romping, too, had a merry laugh, and wore pretty gowns. Every morning one of the maids plaited her black hair with a red ribbon. As for my little friend, Marusia, she never ran, had probably never romped in her life, and seldom laughed. And, when she did, her laughter was low and sweet, like the tinkling of a tiny silver bell. Her frock was old and dirty, and there were no ribbons in her hair. On

the other hand, her tresses were more beautiful and abundant than Sonia's and, to my surprise, Valek knew how to dress them prettily, and arranged them every morning.

At that time I was a regular madcap. "That boy's limbs are filled with quicksilver," my elders used to say. And I quite believed them, though how and by whom the operation was performed, passed my comprehension. From the beginning of our acquaintance, I imparted to my relations with Valek and Marusia something of my own liveliness. I doubt whether the old vaults beneath the chapel had ever echoed to such loud shouts, as those with which I tried to rouse the brother and sister from their sadness and apathy, and make them play with me. But those well-meant efforts met with scant success. Valek's face refused to smile. When I would have Marusia try to run, he said :—

"Let her alone. If you don't, she will cry."

In fact, when she was at length persuaded to use her legs, and I ran after her, the poor child stopped short and turned round, and raising her hands as if to shield her head, gave me a look like that of a bird caught in a trap, and burst into tears to my great distress.

"I told you how it would be," said Valek ; "she does not like playing."

Then we made her sit on the grass, and gathered wild flowers for her. Soon she stopped crying and amused herself with the flowers, kissing the blue-bells, and talking in whispers to the golden buttercups. But the incident had damped my spirits, and made me thoughtful.

"Why is she always so?"—I asked Valek in an undertone, indicating Marusia with my eyes.

"Lifeless? It is because of the Gray Stone," answered the lad with an air of grave conviction.

"Yes," repeated the child in her melodious voice ; "it is because of the Gray Stone."

"What Gray Stone?" I asked wondering.

"The Gray Stone which has sucked the life out of her," explained Valek, looking vacantly before him. "So at least says Tyburzy, and Tyburzy knows everything."

"Y—yes," again echoed the melodious voice ; "Tyburzy knows everything."

I could not understand the meaning of these mysterious words, which Valek quoted from Tyburzy ; but the assumption that they must be true because he said so, and that Tyburzy knew everything impressed me deeply. Raising myself on

my elbow (we were lying on the grass) I regarded Marusia attentively. She was sitting where Valek had placed her, and still playing with the flowers. The movements of the tiny hands were slow, and the long eyelashes almost touched her pale cheeks.

As I looked at that sickly diminutive figure I felt that, though I understood them not, there must be some bitter truth hidden in Tyburzy's words. Somebody or something had undoubtedly sucked the life out of this strange child who cried when other children laughed. But what had the Gray Stone to do with it?"

For me it was a mystery far stranger and more awesome than that of the old castle. Though the stories of Turkish skeletons upholding the island, and of the old count who came out of his grave on stormy nights, were sufficiently horrible, there was in them something of the fantastic unreality of a fairy tale. But here were facts, palpable and terribly real. Something formless, hard, pitiless, and cruel was pressing on that frail body, sucking out of it the bloom of health, the lustre of the eyes and the vivacity of youth.

"It must be done at nights," I said to myself and a sense of deepest pity took possession of my heart, and damped the natural buoyancy of my

spirits. Conforming ourselves to the quiet ways of the little maid, Valek and I played gently, and while she sat on the grass brought her flowers, colored pebbles and bright winged insects. Sometimes as we lay stretched by her side we would watch the clouds floating over the cross of the old chapel, or tell the child stories, or talk as the spirit moved us.

This intercourse united Valek and myself in the bonds of a close friendship which strengthened every day, notwithstanding the disparity of our characters and the difference in our social positions. To my high spirits and impulsive ways he opposed thoughtful gravity and a self-contained manner, winning my respectful admiration by his authoritative tone and the freedom of his comments on grown-up people. Moreover, for a boy of his age, Valek had a large experience, and told me many things of which I had never dreamed of.

Once, hearing him speak of Tyburzy with the freedom of an equal, I asked whether the man were not his father.

“Yes, I suppose he is,” was the answer.

“Does he love you?”

“I am sure he does,” said the lad positively.

“He always takes care of me ; and, do you know, he sometimes kisses me and cries.”

“And he loves me also and cries,” put in Marusia with childish pride.

“And my father does not love me at all,” I said despondently. “He never kisses me ; he is not good to me.”

“Is not he?” exclaimed Valek with a look of surprise. “And yet Tyburzy thinks very highly of your father, and praises him as he praises no other man, and he knows everything, Tyburzy does. He says that your father is the best man in the town. He says that but for him, and the priest, who was lately interdicted, and the Jewish rabbi, the town would long ago have been destroyed by a rain of fire and brimstone. It is only for the sake of those three, he says, that it is not.”

“Why for the sake of those three?”

“But for them the town would be reduced to ashes. So, at any rate, says Tyburzy, and he knows. They alone stand up for poor people’s rights. Do you know that your father once decided a case against a real count?”

“Yes, it is quite true. The count was very angry ; I heard him storming and complaining.”

“Well, a man must have courage to withstand a count.”

“Why?”

“What a question!” exclaimed Valek. “Because a count is a count; he does what he likes, drives in a carriage and has other people’s money. Do you think any other judge, if he had been offered money, would have scrupled to condemn the great man’s adversary, who was poor?”

“Yes, I heard the count shout in the court-house: ‘I can buy you all, and sell you again.’”

“And your father, what said he?”

“He bade him go! ‘Begone!’ he said.”

“Did he really? There is a man for you! And do you know that when old Ivaniska came before him on her crutches, he told them to bring her a chair, and made her sit down, while all the others had to stand. Yes, he is a man. Even Turkevich never makes scandals before the judge’s windows.”

This was true. My father was the only functionary in whose favor Turkevich made an exception.

Valek’s remarks gave me food for thought, and I thought earnestly. He put my father’s character in a new light. His remarks gratified my filial pride. I was pleased to hear my father praised on

the authority of Tyburzy, who knew everything, and there arose in my heart a feeling to which I had long been a stranger, a feeling of deep love for my father, mingled, however, with the bitter consciousness that he did not love me, and never would love me, as Tyburzy loved Valek and Marusia.

VI.

AMONG GRAY STONES.

A WEEK passed away. For three days none of the outcast community had appeared in the town. I sought them continually without success, and to my bitter disappointment I was compelled to discontinue my visits to the mountain. The Professor was hanging about as usual, but of Turkevitch and Tyburzy nothing could be seen. This made me feel miserable; the society of the two waifs had become a necessity to me. But on the evening of the third day, as I sauntered listlessly and in low spirits through the dirty streets, a hand was laid on my shoulder.

“Valek!” I exclaimed turning round.

“Why have you dropped coming?” he asked.

“I dared not. Your people did not show up in the town.”

“Oh, that is the reason! Well, the fault is mine, I forgot to tell you that our people are gone some-

where else. You may come freely. . . . I thought it was perhaps something else."

"What else?"

"I thought you might be growing tired of us."

"Not at all. I will go with you now. I have even been keeping some apples ready in my pocket."

At the mention of apples Valek made as if he had something to tell me. But taking, as it seemed, another thought he merely looked at me strangely, and then, seeing that I was waiting for him to speak, observed carelessly:—

"It is nothing. You set off,—I will overtake you.—I have somebody to see here on business."

I went slowly, looking back every few minutes. But Valek did not appear, and even when I reached the chapel there was no sign of his coming. This put me in a fix, for without Valek I knew not whither to go or how to find his sister. There was nothing for it but to wait. To while away the time I wandered among the graves, trying to read the half obliterated inscriptions on the mossy tombstones. One of these took my attention particularly. It belonged to a large family vault. The upper stones had been torn away, probably by the wind, and lay on the grass. The door, however, was

nailed up. Being curious to know the reason, and what, if anything, was inside, I reared an old cross against the broken wall and climbing up looked over. So far as I could see, the inclosure contained nothing whatever. But in the bottom of it was fixed a common glazed window frame, through which gaped the sombre emptiness of the vaulted tomb.

As I looked into the narrow fold, wondering what use a window could be in such a place as that, I heard a noise, and looking round saw Valek running towards me. He seemed tired and his face was covered with sweat. In one of his hands he carried a large white loaf, and there was something hidden under his coat.

"So you have discovered it at last!" he exclaimed with a laugh. "If Tyburzy had caught you there, he would have been angry, and no mistake. But you are a good fellow and won't blab. Come along! I will show you where we live."

"Is it far?" I asked.

"You will soon see. Come!"

Pushing aside a large lilac bush Valek disappeared among the greenery at the base of the chapel. Following him quickly I found myself in a small well-trodden circular space almost sur-

rounded by blackberry bushes. In the middle of it was a dark hole with steps like the entrance to a cellar.

Valek, beckoning me to follow him, went down, In a few seconds we were underground and in utter darkness. Giving me his hand, my companion led me by a damp narrow passage for a considerable distance, when, turning abruptly to the right, he shoved me into a spacious cavern or cellar.

I stopped at the entrance, struck by the unusual sight. The cavern was lighted by two skylights one of which I had just discovered, the second, like the first, being a window let in to the floor of a vault. From each of these windows was pouring down a column of light, which contrasted strangely with the sombre background of the cavern, once a great burial vault but now cleared of its ghastly relics. The flooring and the walls were of stone. At each corner was a stout stone pillar, supporting a massive arched roof. Beneath the skylights were sitting two human shapes. One of them was the Professor, mending his rags with a darning needle. He did not so much as raise his head to look at us, and but for the automatic movement of his hands might have been mistaken for a stone statue.

Under the other skylight sat Marusia, with her lap full of wild flowers, in a flood of light streaming from above on her pallid face and flaxen hair, and looking like a small bright spot or vanishing shadow in a wilderness of gray stone. When the sun was hidden for a few seconds by a passing cloud the cavern darkened, and the sombre abode seemed to widen and expand. But the next moment the hard cold walls and pillars would stand out as grimly as before, as if intent on crushing under their unbreakable embrace the fragile figure of the little girl.

Involuntarily I thought of Valek's saying about the Gray Stone sucking out Marusia's life. It seemed to me as if I were in the monster's very presence. He touched me with his cold invisible hands and glared at me from the corners of the cavern with his cruel sightless eyes.

"Valek!" exclaimed Marusia in a voice which showed how dearly she loved him.

When she saw me her face brightened a little. I offered her a couple of apples, and Valek, breaking the roll which he had brought from the village, gave one piece to her and another to the Professor. The poor scholar began munching it without intermitting his work.

It was all very strange, and I began to feel uneasy under the oppressive influence of the Gray Stone.

“Let us leave them!” I whispered, pulling Valek’s sleeve.

“Shall we go upstairs, Marusia?” asked the boy of his sister, whereupon we all three left the vault. But even in the open air I could not shake off the uneasy feeling which oppressed me; and Valek was more serious and silent than usual.

“You stayed behind to buy bread, I suppose?” I inquired.

“To buy?” he answered with a laugh. “With whose money, I should like to know?”

“How then? Somebody gave it you probably?”

“You are very sharp. Do you think any of the townsfolk would give bread to the like of me? No, my friend. I helped myself to the loaf at the baker’s stall, when the baker’s back was turned.”

This was said very quietly, and without the least show of shame, Valek while lying on the turf with his hands under his head. Turning round, I looked him full in the face.

“Then you stole the loaf?”

“Of course.”

I was quite disconcerted, and for a minute

neither of us spoke. I was the first to break silence :

“It is wrong to steal,” I said sadly.

“Our people were all gone, and Marusia was crying with hunger.”

“Yes, Marusia was crying,” repeated the child :

I had never known what it was to hunger, but Marusia’s words made me feel as I had never felt before, and I looked at my friends as if I saw them for the first time, Valek was still stretched on his back, watching a hawk as it soared in the sky. At this moment I did not admire him as I had done previously, and when I looked at Marusia my heart ached.

“Why did not you mention this to me?” I said with an effort. “Why did not you say you were hungry?”

“I did think of it, but I changed my mind. It would not have helped matters. I knew you had no money of your own.”

“Never mind that. I could have got you bread from the house.”

“How—secretly?”

“Why—yes.”

“But would not that be stealing?”

“Nothing of the sort. It is all my father’s.”

“So much the worse. I never steal from my father.”

“I could have asked. I am sure they would not have refused me.”

“Perhaps not—for once. But your people cannot keep all the beggars.”

“Are you—beggars?” I demanded in a voice which must have betrayed my dismay.

“Yes, beggars!” Valek said surlily.

I remained silent for a few minutes, and then rose to take my leave.

“Going already?” asked Valek.

“Yes, I am going.”

I was going because I could no longer play with my friends and retain my former serenity of mind. My pure childish attachment to them had received a rude shock. It was not that my love for Marusia and Valek was lessened, but it had become complicated with a sense of pity so intense as to be almost pain.

I went to bed early, because I knew not where to put this new feeling which troubled my peace. I cried bitterly, hiding my face on the pillow until consoling sleep came to my aid, and made me oblivious to my grief.

VII.

TYBURZY APPEARS ON THE SCENE.

"HULLO! I thought you did not mean to come here again," were the words with which Valek greeted me on the following day when I went to the mountain once more, words whose significance I fully understood.

"No. I shall always come to you," I said resolutely; "so let us have done with this once for all."

On this Valek's face brightened, and we both felt more at ease.

"Well, how about your people?" I asked. "Not back yet?"

"Not yet: the deuce take them."

After this we amused ourselves by catching sparrows under a riddle, or rather an old box, which, as also a supply of barley and sufficient length of twine, I had brought with me. Marusia worked the trap. When some adventurous sparrow, al-

lured by the barley, hopped under the box, she would pull the string and catch him—only, however, to set him free a minute afterwards.

We were so intent on this sport that we did not notice that dark clouds were gathering over our heads, and the first signs of an impending storm which we perceived were heavy drops of rain and a loud peal of thunder.

We had to seek instant shelter somewhere, and though I hated the cavern, I thought as Marusia and Valek lived there it was good enough for me, and so, overcoming my repugnance, I went down with them. The place was very dark and very quiet, only the peals of thunder sounded like the rumbling of a gigantic car on a paved road.

Soon I felt more at home ; but the thunder and lightning, the pattering of rain, and the swish of running water—all these unusual sounds produced in us a state of nervous excitement which demanded an outlet.

I proposed 'a game of blind-man's-buff, and Valek, acquiescing, fastened a bandage over my eyes. Marusia was laughing with her fay-like laughter, and moving slowly about on her poor weak legs ; myself the while making believe that I could not catch her ; when I suddenly ran against

something big and damp, and felt myself seized by the leg. The next moment I was hanging head downwards, the bandage fell from my eyes, and I saw Tyburzy, wet and angry, and appearing all the more terrible that I was compelled to look at him from below.

“What does this mean, Valek?” he asked sternly.

“You spend your time pleasantly here, young gentleman, and, as I see, in good company.”

“Let me down! Let me down!” I screamed, rather wondering that I was able to speak at all in such a position.

But Tyburzy only tightened his grasp.

“*Responde!* Answer!” he asked Valek angrily. But the only answer the lad made was to put two of his fingers in his mouth, thereby signifying that he had nothing to tell.

Tyburzy lifted me up.

“Your worship, if my eyes don’t deceive me!” he said sarcastically. “Pray what has induced you to honor my humble abode with your presence?”

“Let me down! Let me down!” I repeated, with a kick in the air which in other circumstances would have been an angry stamp of my foot on the floor.

Tyburzy laughed loudly.

“You are losing your temper, young sir. But you don’t know me, or what is in store for you. *Ego, Tyburzy, sum.* I will hang you by the legs over the fire and roast you like a fowl, that is what I will do.”

Valek looked so horror-struck that I really feared Tyburzy would carry out his threat, and he might have done it had not Marusia interceded for me.

“Don’t be frightened, Vasio,” she piped, toddling to her father’s feet. “He never roasts boys over the fire. It is not true.”

By a rapid movement, Tyburzy turned me the right side up and set me on my legs. But the blood had rushed to my head; and I was so giddy that without his support I should have fallen. Sitting down on a wooden block he took me between his knees.

“How did you come here?” he demanded roughly. “Have you two been long acquainted?” Then seeing that I was not disposed to answer, he turned to Valek, repeated the question, and bade him speak out.

“Yes, we have,” said the lad.

“How long?”

“Ten days.”

This reply seemed to tranquillize Tyburzy somewhat.

"Ten days! So long!" he exclaimed, looking me in the face. "Have you blabbed to anybody?"

"No."

"On your honor?"

"On my honor."

"*Bene!* Good! This makes me hope that as you have not blabbed in the past neither will you blab in the future. But I always had a good opinion of you from seeing you so often rambling about. A genuine street boy, though a judge's son. Now, will you judge us? Come now, tell me!" Tyburzy's tone, though bantering was quite good-natured, but I still bore him a grudge for handling me so roughly, and I answered gruffly:—

"I am not a judge; I am Vasio."

"The one does not preclude the other. Vasio may also be a judge—in time. It is an old story, my friend. As you see, I am Tyburzy, and he—is Valek. I am a beggar, so is he. To speak plainly, I steal, so will he. Your father judges me, and when your time comes you will judge Valek."

"I shall not judge Valek," I returned angrily. "It is not true."

“No ! He won’t judge Valek,” piped Marusia indignantly, as if she resented as much as I did the charge which her father had made against me ; and then she crept up to him, and he laid his hand tenderly on her fair curls.

“Don’t pledge yourself beforehand,” said the strange man, as seriously as if he were addressing a grown-up person. “Don’t pledge yourself beforehand, *amice*. It is an old story which is always new. To every man his own lot. *Suum cuique*. Let every one follow the path traced out for him, and it is well that yours for a moment has crossed ours. It is well for you, *amice* ; because, look you, it is better even for a judge to have a human heart than a heart of stone. Do you understand ?”

I did not, yet I was all attention, for the man attracted me strangely, and his keen eyes seemed to be reading my inmost thoughts.

“Of course you don’t understand. You are too young for the comprehension of higher things. Mind, therefore, what I am going to tell you, so that in the time to come you may keep in memory the words of Tyburzy the philosopher. If you should have to sit in judgment on this lad, remember that even at the time when he and you were

play-fellows together you belonged to a world where people went about in broadcloth and well fed, while he wore rags which, as often as not, covered an empty belly. But until that time comes remember also another thing (here Tyburzy's manner became harsh and menacing), remember that if you betray us to your father, or even to a bird flying in the air, I will hang you head downward over a fire and make smoked ham of you. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly. I shall blab to nobody. May I come again?"

"Well, granted—*sub conditionem*. But you don't understand Latin. You are too young and foolish. Don't forget what I said just now about smoked ham."

And then, letting me go, Tyburzy stretched himself wearily on a long settle which stood against the wall.

"There is something," he observed to Valek, pointing to a big basket which he had put on the floor when he came in. "There is something here. We shall dine to-day."

He was no longer the same man who a few minutes previously had frightened me with fierce looks and terrible threats, nor the buffoon who was

wont to amuse the public for a few coppers. He was the father returning to the bosom of the family, after a hard day's work.

He seemed very tired ; his rags were sodden, and his damp hair clung to his forehead. There was a worn look on his face which I had sometimes observed on the faces of frequenters of taverns. It was the face of a player behind the scenes after the performance of a difficult piece on the stage—a novel sight to me, like many another which I saw at the chapel.

Valek and I went to work with a will. He lighted a splinter of resinous wood, and we went into a dark passage where, in a recess in the wall, was a quantity of firewood—broken pieces of crosses, old boards, wind-fallen branches and such like. With this we made a fire in a corner of the cavern, where a hearth and a chimney had been contrived. Then I withdrew, and left the cooking of Tyburzy's spoil to my more experienced friend.

In half-an-hour he put on the three-legged table a dish of porridge and a savory ragout, served in the frying-pan in which it had been cooked.

Tyburzy rose from the settle.

“All is ready !” he exclaimed, “come and eat with us, young sir ; you have earned your dinner.

Now, Domine," to the professor, "lay down your needle and share in our feast."

"At once," said the professor in a low voice, rather surprising me by the reasonableness of his answer.

But the spark of intelligence which Tyburzy had called forth did not reappear. The old man stuck the needle in his rags and seated himself at the table with the listless indifference of imbecility.

Marusia sat on her father's lap. Valek and she ate with an avidity which showed that butcher meat was a luxury they seldom enjoyed. After every mouthful Marusia greedily licked her dirty little fingers. Tyburzy ate slowly and deliberately; and, as if yielding to an imperative necessity to speak, addressed frequent remarks to the professor. The poor scholar listened with seeming attention, leaning forward and nodding his head as if he understood every word—at times even going so far as to give an approving nod or sympathetic grunt.

"Does it never strike you, Domine," observed Tyburzy, "does it never strike you with how little a man may be content? Now we have eaten and drunk, and our hearts are merry, and for these good things have only to thank God and the Abbot of Clevan."

“Yes, yes,” grunted the professor.

“You say ‘yes’ to everything, Domine, as is your wont. Yet you don’t understand that but for the Abbot we should have had neither meat nor aught else to-day.”

“It was he who gave it you, then?” I put in.

“You see, Domine, the lad has an inquiring mind,” observed Tyburzy, addressing himself, as before, to the old man. “And he is quite right in his supposition; for, as a matter of fact, we are indebted to his Eminence for all that we are enjoying, though we did not precisely ask him for it. It was not merely a case of the right hand not knowing what the left was giving; to tell the truth, neither of his hands had aught to do with it.”

From these vague and enigmatic remarks I only gathered that the method whereby the provisions in question had been acquired was somewhat uncommon, and I could not refrain from putting another question:—

“You took it then—yourself?”

“The lad is not devoid of perspicacity, Domine. It is a pity he has not seen the Abbot *in propria persona*. His Eminence’s belly is as big as a beer-barrel, owing to excessive indulgence in the pleasures of the table—to the great injury of his digestion. We, on the other hand, suffer from being

over-thin and scanty fare, wherefore a little flesh diet will do us good. Am I right, Domine?"

"Yes, yes," answered the professor in his pensive guttural.

"This time you give your assent reasonably and in the right place. I am glad of it, for I was beginning to think that this lad had more brains than certain scholars. . . . Reverting, however, to our subject: I think that a good lesson is worth its price, and on that assumption we may say that we have paid for these provisions; and if the Abbot makes his larder more secure for the future he will probably avoid paying for other and more costly lessons. However"—turning to me—"you are still too much of a simpleton to understand these things. But my Marusia does. Tell me, darling, was it good for me to bring you this meat?"

"Good!" replied the child, with glistening eyes. "Marusia was hungry."

In the evening I went home with my mind in a sort of fog. Tyburzy's strange arguments had not for one moment shaken my conviction that it was wrong to steal. Rather had they strengthened that conviction, and intensified the sense of pain with which I had first learnt that these people lived by pilfering. They were beggars and thieves. I had

been taught that begging and thieving were equally despicable, and I felt a contemptuous bitterness for their way of life rising in my mind. Nevertheless, I considered my affection for the two forlorn children as a thing apart, to be jealously guarded from the intruding influence of unworthier feelings. The result of this vague mental process was an increase of pity for Valek and Marusia, which drew closer the bonds which united us. My belief that it was wrong to steal remained unshaken; but when I remembered Marusia's face, as the child licked her greasy fingers, I could not help rejoicing that Valek and she had been enabled for once to eat their fill.

In the dark avenue of our garden I unexpectedly stumbled against my father. He was pacing to and fro, with his usual dejected air and absent look. When he saw me, he laid his hand on my shoulder, and asked where I had been, to which I answered :—

“Taking a walk.” This was not strictly true, and it was, I think, the first untrue thing I had ever said.

My father regarded me closely, as if he had it in his mind to tell me something. But he merely waved his hand, and resumed his solitary walk.

I had always been afraid of my father. I was

now more afraid of him than ever. There was a whole world of vague questions and strange ideas surging in my mind of which he knew nothing. Could I, without breaking my word and betraying my friends, make him my confidant? I trembled at the thought that he might some day hear of my relations with bad society. All the same, it was impossible for me to sever my connection therewith, and abandon Valek and Marusia.

VIII

AUTUMN.

AUTUMN was drawing near. The reapers were busy in the cornfields, the leaves were turning brown and yellow, the nights were lengthening—and Marusia began to droop.

She had no particular complaint, she merely faded away, slowly and painlessly. Her face grew paler, her eyes darkened and became larger, and she raised the lids with ever-increasing difficulty.

I could now go to the mountain and get into the cavern without difficulty. If I had been one of them, the outcasts could not have received me more cordially, or treated me with greater kindness.

“You are a smart boy, and some day you will be a general,” Turkevich often said to me.

The younger members of the fraternity made me bows and arrows and arquebuses. Zarisailoff, the long-legged, red-nosed corporal, threw me in the air like a ball by way of teaching me gymnastics.¹

Only two of them—the Professor and Lavrosky—took no notice of me. The former seemed always absorbed in thought ; and Lavrosky, when he was sober, avoided human society, and liked to hide himself in dark corners.

All these people lived apart from Tyburzy, who with his family occupied the cavern to which I was first introduced. The others lived in a similar dwelling of larger dimensions, which communicated with the smaller one by a narrow passage. It was even darker and damper than the den which Tyburzy called his own. Round the walls were ranged wooden settles, and a few logs that served as stools. The settles, which were covered with rags, served also as sleeping-places. Directly under the skylight was a joiner's bench at which Tyburzy and some of the younger outcasts occasionally worked. But except Tyburzy, they were all either unskilled amateurs or confirmed sots, whose hands trembled so much that they could scarce hold their tools. The floor of the larger cavern was always littered with shavings, rubbish, and dirt ; though Tyburzy scolded and abused his companions for their untidiness, and every now and then compelled them to sweep up, and make their gloomy abode less offensive.

But into this place I seldom went. I could neither breathe, without discomfort, its foul air, nor bear the presence of Lavrosky, who, when he was sober, spent here the greater part of his time—either sitting in a corner with his head clasped between his hands, or pacing feverishly to and fro. There was an air of hopeless misery about the man, which positively oppressed me. But his companions were so much accustomed to his eccentricities that they had ceased to see anything unusual in them. General Turkevich sometimes employed him as secretary, giving him petitions and other pettifogging documents to copy, and dictating lampoons and scurrilous compositions which the author himself would paste on the town walls after dark. Lavrosky always put himself obediently to the task, and covered quires of paper with his beautiful handwriting. Twice, when I was in the cavern, I saw Lavrosky brought home helplessly drunk, his head hanging down, his long hair trailing in the mud, his legs and arms striking against the walls and the steps. On these occasions Marusia and I, pressing fearfully together, watched the scene from the furthest corner. But Valek moved freely among the grown-up people, supporting now the head, now the arms or the legs of the miserable man.

Now that I was admitted behind the scenes, all that I had found so amusing when those people were playing their tricks in the streets, appeared to me sad and pitiful, and painfully affected my childish heart.

Of this underground world, Tyburzy was the undisputed lord and master. All its inhabitants recognized him as their leader, and obeyed him as their chief. To this fact I probably owe it, that none of these men, albeit they had undoubtedly lost God's image, ever approached me with a dishonorable proposition. Now that I have grown older, and become experienced in the world's ways, I know, of course, how vicious was the life led by the outcasts of the cavern. But when I call to mind these incidents of my childhood, I see, through the mists of the past, only the tragic and human side of their characters and careers.

Childhood and youth are the chief sources of idealism.

The year sped on ; autumn was nearly past, and the weather worsened. Bright days were few and far between ; thick clouds covered the sky and hid the sun ; the rain came down noisily, filling the cavern with a hollow, monotonous rumble.

It was naturally very awkward and inconvenient

for me to get away from home in such weather as this. I had to slip out of the house unobserved, and when I returned in the evening, wet through and through, I spread my clothes before the fire to dry, and bore, with philosophic resignation, the reproaches of the nurse and the maids.

Whenever I went to the mountain after a few days absence, I observed a marked change in Marusia. The poor child faded before my eyes. She seldom ventured into the chapel-yard. The Gray Stone—the dark, silent monster of the cavern—continued its work without surcease, sucking the life out of her little body. She spent the greater part of her time in bed, and Valek and I did our utmost to amuse her, and make her laugh her old silvery laugh.

I had become so familiar with these people, and so intimate with the two children, that Marusia's sad smile was almost as dear to me as Sonia's. I was more at home in this bad society than in my father's house. None of the outcasts ever spoke of my evil propensities, or reproached me with my faults, imaginary or real. I was always welcome, and I knew that I was useful. My arrival always brought a flush of color to Marusia's pale cheeks, and the light of gladness to her eyes.

Valek embraced me as a brother, and often Tyburzy looked at us with strange eyes, wherein something very like a tear seemed to glisten.

After a time the weather improved. The clouds drifted away, and for the last time before the advent of winter, we had brighter days. We could take Marusia out-of-doors, and the fresh air and the sunshine appeared to revive her. She gazed round with wide-open eyes, and her cheeks looked less pallid and deathlike. It seemed as if the wind and the sun were giving her back some part of the life of which she was being bereft by the Gray Stone.

But this did not last long. . . .

Meanwhile clouds were gathering over my own head.

One morning as I passed through the garden, I saw my father walking down the avenue, accompanied by old Yanush from the castle. The old man was bowing obsequiously and making an important communication, to which my father stopped to listen, an angry frown on his brow. At length he waved his hand peremptorily, as if to drive Yanush away.

"I do not believe one word of it," I heard him say. "What want you with these people? Where

are your proofs? I can accept no mere verbal denunciation, and a written denunciation must be proved. Begone, I decline to hear you!"

Here my father made so energetic a gesture that Yanush dared not insist further, and each of them went his way.

I disliked and distrusted the old fox from the castle. I felt sure that his visit to our house boded no good, and I had little doubt that his conversation with my father referred to my friends, perhaps to myself.

When I told Tyburzy what had happened, he made an expressive grimace.

"Ah, my lad, this is bad news you bring. Oh, the cursed old fox!"

"But my father sent him packing," I observed, by way of consolation.

"Your father, my lad, is the best judge the world has seen since the reign of King Solomon. But, do you know what *curriculum vitæ* means? Of course you don't. I daresay, though, you know what a 'service list' is. Well, *curriculum vitæ* is just the 'service list' of a man who has not served anywhere, and if the old owl from the castle has smelt a rat, and can bring proofs of his statement to your father—Well, by the Holy Virgin, I should

not in that case like to fall into his hands."

"Is he so cruel?"

"No, no! God forbid that I should say aught but good of your father. He is a man with a heart. Maybe he already suspects what Yanush has told him, yet shuts his eyes, not wanting to rout a wounded old creature out of his last refuge. . . . How shall I explain the matter to you? You see, your father serves a master whose name is 'law.' He has bowels only so long as this master of his remains quietly on the shelf. But when he awakens up, slips down, and says. 'Well judge, don't you think the time is come to give a little of your attention to that fellow Tyburzy Drab, or whatever his name may be?' When he receives this order—for that is what it comes to—your father's heart turns to stone, and his hands become so hard and far-reaching that there is no escaping them.

"Do you understand now? And that is why we all respect your father so much. He serves his master faithfully, and such people are scarce. If all servants of the law were like your father, it might take a very long nap on the shelf. The pity of it in my case is, that once upon a time—now long

ago—I had a fight with the law, and a very bitter fight it was.”

This reminiscence seemed to set Tyburzy a thinking. He remained pensively silent for several minutes, and then, abruptly rising, he took Marusia in his arms, kissed her passionately and clasped her to his breast.

I stood there watching him for a long time, my mind full of strange thoughts.

Notwithstanding the obscurity of his speech I was under no misapprehension as to its significance. My father appeared to me strong and great, and as if crowned with an aureole. Yet my pride in him was mingled with the bitter thought :—“And still he does not love me !”

IX.

THE DOLL.

WHEN the bright days were irrevocably past Marusia grew rapidly worse. Our efforts to amuse her were of no avail. She merely looked at us with her large sunken eyes ; and her little silvery laugh was seldom or never heard. I took her dolls of my own making ; but as she did not seem to care for them, I resolved to apply to my sister.

Sonia had a big doll, with a pretty painted face and thick flaxen hair, the gift of our departed mother. I thought a great deal of that doll, and one morning I took Sonia aside and asked her to lend it me for a while. I begged so earnestly, and described so vividly the poor sick girl who had no dolls of her own, that though at first she refused, pressing the doll jealously to her bosom, she ended by giving her consent, and promised that for two or three days she would play with other toys and say nothing about the doll.

The effect of this Chinese beauty on my little friend surpassed my most sanguine expectations. Marusia, who was fading away like the last rose of summer, revived like a flower in spring. She kissed me so effusively, laughed so heartily, and talked to her new acquaintance so merrily, that I congratulated myself warmly on the success of my device. The doll seemed to have wrought a miracle. Marusia, who for a fortnight had not risen from her bed, got up and began to walk, leading by the hand her fair nursling, sometimes even attempting to run.

But to me, personally, the doll brought serious trouble. As I was taking her to the mountain, hidden under my coat, I fell in with old Yanush, who followed me a long time, suspiciously shaking his head. Then, after a day or two the old nurse, missing the doll, sought for it high and low. Sonia by her *naïve* protests that she need not trouble about the doll, that it was merely gone out for a walk and would be back presently, only made matters worse and confirmed the nurse in the suspicions which she had already begun to entertain. As yet, my father knew nothing of this, but soon Yanush made him another visit, and though he was again repulsed, my father stopped me in the garden and

bade me stay at home. The next day and the day after that the order was repeated, but on the fourth morning I rose early and ran off to the mountain before my father was up.

There, things were gone from bad to worse. Marusia was in bed, in a state of high fever. She did not recognise me, her face was flushed, her hair strewn on her pillow. By her side lay the unlucky doll, with its rosy cheeks and stupid beady eyes.

I told Valek of my apprehensions, and we decided that it was advisable to take back the doll forthwith, all the more so as it could now be done without Marusia's knowledge and, consequently, without giving her pain. In this, however, we were mistaken. I had no sooner removed the plaything than the poor child, opening her eyes, looked vacantly before her, and though she neither recognised us nor understood what had happened, she began sobbing most pitifully. At the same time her thin transparent face became so grief-stricken, even through the mist of delirium, that I was frightened, and hastily replaced the doll in its former position. On this, she smiled, took the doll tenderly in her arms, and grew calm again. It was evident that I could not take it away from

her without depriving my little friend of the first and last joy of her short life.

Valek regarded me timidly.

“What is to be done?” he asked in a troubled voice. Tyburzy, who sat despondent on the settle, gave me an inquiring glance.

“Never mind! The nurse has probably forgotten all about the doll by this time,” I said, with as much indifference as I could assume.

But nurse had not forgotten. As I went home I met Yanush at the gate once more. I found Sonia in tears, and the old woman eyed me angrily, muttering something with her toothless mouth that sounded like a threat.

My father asked me where I had been, and on receiving my usual reply bade me take no more walks outside the garden without his permission. This order was so peremptorily given that I dared not disobey it; and when I would have asked for permission my courage failed me.

Thus passed four anxious days. I strolled in the garden, looking wistfully toward the mountain, and expecting every moment the breaking of the storm which I knew was gathering over my head. What would happen I could not tell. I did not know what it was to be punished, for though my

father neglected me he had never laid his hand on me or even given me a harsh word. But now I feared the worst.

At last I was summoned to his study. I obeyed the call promptly, but when I reached the room I stopped timidly at the open door. The pale autumn sun was looking in through the window. My father sat in his arm-chair before our mother's portrait. He seemed unconscious of my presence ; and I could hear the anxious beating of my heart.

At last he turned to me. I raised my eyes to him, but, awed by his angry looks, I lowered them at once. Though for at least half a minute he did not speak I felt that he was still sternly regarding me.

"You have taken your sister's doll !" he said. At these words I shuddered, so harsh and cold was the tone in which they were uttered.

"Yes," I said, in a low voice.

"Though you knew it was a present from your mother to Sonia, and which you therefore ought to have held sacred. You stole it."

"No," I said, raising my head, and looking him in the face.

"How dare you !" exclaimed my father springing from his chair.

“You stole it and took it away. To whom did you take it?”

“Answer me! Out with it! To whom did you take the doll?”

He came to me and laid a heavy hand on my shoulder. Again I raised my eyes to his—with a great effort. His face was pale; the wrinkle which, since my mother's death, suffering had traced between his eyebrows, was deeper than ever, and his eyes blazed with anger.

I shuddered again.

In those eyes, the eyes of my father, I saw madness—or hatred.

“Why are you dumb? Speak out!” and the hand gave my shoulder a tighter grip.

“I won't!” I murmured.

“Yes, you will,” said my father sternly and menacingly.

“I won't,” I repeated, almost inaudibly.

“You will, you will.”

His voice was hollow. It seemed to me that he was trying hard to master his passion. The hand on my shoulder trembled, and I thought I could hear rage surging in his breast. I bent my head lower and lower, and the tears which filled my eyes fell one after the other on the floor. But again I repeated:—

"No, I won't. . . . Never!"

I was resolved to keep my secret, however severely I might be punished. To my father's anger I mentally opposed the inarticulate reproaches of a forlorn child, and the deep love which I cherished for those whom he would have had me betray.

He breathed heavily, I shrunk within myself still more. Bitter tears rolled down my cheeks. I waited.

It is difficult to describe truly what were my feelings at that moment. I knew that he was in the very agony of an unspeakable passion, and that in another moment I might be writhing in the furious grasp of his powerful hands.

"What will he do with me? Will he kill me?" I asked myself. Yet I do not think it was exactly this that I dreaded. Even at that terrible moment I loved my father, and I instinctively felt and feared that by one act of violence he might turn my love into hatred as intense as that which flashed upon me from his furious dark eyes.

I ended by losing all sense of fear, and feeling instead insolently defiant. I would, if I could, have hastened the catastrophe with which I was threatened.

If he must kill me, let it be so. . . . So much

the better, so much the better. This was the burden of my thoughts, while he held me in his grasp and my fate trembled in the balance.

My father sighed. I had ceased looking at him but I heard him sigh—deeply, nervously.

Whether he had succeeded in stifling his anger or it was going to blaze out in some act of violence I never knew. I knew only that at this critical moment a voice, the shrill voice, of Tyburzy, was heard through the open window.

“Oh, I come in the very nick of time it seems,” he cried.

“It’s Tyburzy,” I said to myself. But his coming made no impression on me. I was convinced that nothing on earth, least of all the presence of this vagabond, could avert the catastrophe which I now regarded as inevitable, and which I expected with a sense of angry defiance.

Meanwhile, Tyburzy walked into the house, and, pausing at the study door, took in the situation with a single glance of his lynx-like eyes. I can still recall every detail of that striking scene.

For a moment a malignant smile gleamed in the outcast’s greenish eyes ; but only for a moment. Then shaking his head, he said, rather regretfully than ironically :—

“I perceive that my young friend is in evil case.”

My father gave him a threatening look, which Tyburzy met without flinching. He was now quite serious, making some of his characteristic grimaces, and his eyes were unusually sad.

“Sir,” he said softly to my father, “sir, you are an upright man. . . . Let the child alone. True, he has been in bad company, but, as God is my witness, he took part in no evil deed; only his compassionate heart feels for my poor ragamuffins, and, by the Holy Virgin, I would rather go to the gallows than let him suffer for his sympathy. Here is your doll, my lad.” (Undoing a small parcel, and producing the pretty painted thing).

My father’s face looked intense surprise; the grasp on my shoulder relaxed.

“What does it all mean?” he demanded.

“Let the boy alone,” repeated the outcast, laying his large palm lovingly on my drooping head. “By threats you will get nothing out of him, but I am most willing to tell you all you desire to know. Can I have a word with you in another room, sir?”

My father’s surprise seemed to increase; but he accepted Tyburzy’s proposal without hesitation, and they left the study together. I stayed where

I was, overwhelmed by conflicting emotions, which I cannot describe, and if now I am able to recall the minutest detail of this episode in my life—even that sparrows were fighting before the window and silvery ripples running rhythmically athwart the fish-pond—it is by a merely mechanical effort of memory.

Nothing external existed for me at that time. There was only a little boy in whose breast love and hatred were contending so fiercely for mastery that he was conscious of nought else. That boy was myself, and I feel keen pity for him. There was besides a hum of voices in the next room, speaking with animation, albeit indistinctly.

Meanwhile, I did not move, and when the talkers returned to the study, I was standing with bent head exactly as they had left me. Once again I felt a hand laid on my head, and there was a touch in it that sent a thrill through my whole body. It was my father's hand gently stroking my hair.

Tyburzy took me in his arms, and put me on his lap.

“Come to us,” he said. “Father gives you leave. Come and take a last look at poor Marusia. She—she is dead.”

His voice was tremulous, his eyes were filled

with tears. After a moment's silence he put me quietly down, rose from his seat, and abruptly quitted the room.

I looked at my father, wondering, for it appeared to me as if he had become another man, and in that man I recognized the ideal father whom I had once so dearly loved. He returned my glance with his usual pensive air, but I saw in his eyes a look of surprise and an unspoken question. It seemed as if the storm that had just passed over us had dispelled the mist which aforetime obscured my father's vision, and that he discerned in me for the first time the familiar traits of his own son.

"You know now that I did not steal the doll," I said, putting my hand confidingly in his. "Sonia lent it to me."

"I know," he returned thoughtfully. "Yes, I know, I have deeply wronged you, Vasio. But you will try to forget it. Won't you?"

I took his hand again, and covered it with kisses. I knew that he would never more look at me with those dreadful eyes, and the long-suppressed affection which I had borne him rekindled in my heart. Love had banished fear.

"You will let me go to the mountain?" I said, remembering Tyburzy's invitation.

“Yes, go, dear boy, and take your last look of the poor child,” he said tenderly, yet with the same touch of wonder in his voice as before. “Go ! . . . But stay ; I will be back in a few minutes. ”

And with that he went to his bedroom, whence he presently returned, holding in his hand a bunch of bank-notes.

“Give these to Tyburzy,” he charged me, “and say that I earnestly entreat him—be sure you remember—say that I earnestly entreat him to accept this money, as from you. Do you understand ? Say also ” (this with seeming hesitation) “say, also, that if he knows aught of a certain—Fedorovitch—let him tell this Fedorovitch that it would be well for him to leave the neighborhood. Now go, Vasio, and be quick.”

I did go quickly, and, overtaking Tyburzy as he ascended the mountain, gave him, somewhat incoherently, my father’s message.

“Earnestly begs—my father—from me ;” and I put the bank-notes into his hand without looking him in the face. He took the money, and listened silently to the warning about Fedorovitch.

In a corner of the cavern lay all that was left of Marusia.

The word "death" has not the same meaning for children as adults, and it was only when I saw the lifeless body of my little friend that I realized this. She was indeed gone, and tears of grief rose to my eyes. She lay serious and motionless, a sad expression on her poor drawn face. The closed eyes were more deeply sunken ; the blue shadows around them darker and more distinctly defined. The mouth was slightly open, as if Marusia were conscious of a childish sorrow reponsive to our tears.

The Professor stood by shaking his head listlessly. Zousailov was at work on a coffin. Lavrosky, now quite sober, was decking the body with flowers which he had himself gathered in the fields. Valek was asleep on the settle, now and then sobbing convulsively.

EPILOGUE.

SHORTLY after Marusia was laid in the ground the outcast community disappeared. Only the Professor, who continued to ramble about the town so long as he lived, and Turkevich, to whom my father gave now and then a little work in the way of copying, remained in the neighborhood. Zou-sailov and his fellows migrated, as was presumed, in search of better fortune. What became of Tyburzy and Valek I never heard.

In the course of the next few years time laid his hand heavily on the old chapel. First of all, the roof fell in, breaking the ceilings of the vaults and caverns, and filling them with rubbish. The piles of gray stone, which dropped from the walls and cumbered the ground, gave the place a still more depressing aspect, and the owls in the courtyard hooted more dismally than ever.

One grave only was carefully tended, fenced in with neat palings, covered with fresh turf, and planted with wild flowers.

Sonia and I visited it often. We liked to sit there, under the murmuring boughs of the beech-trees, and look down on the little town which loomed in the distance. Here we read and talked, built castles in the air, and discussed the winged aspirations of generous youth.

And when the time came for us to leave our quiet home and go out into the wide world, we exchanged over that dear grave assurances of unalterable love.

THE END.

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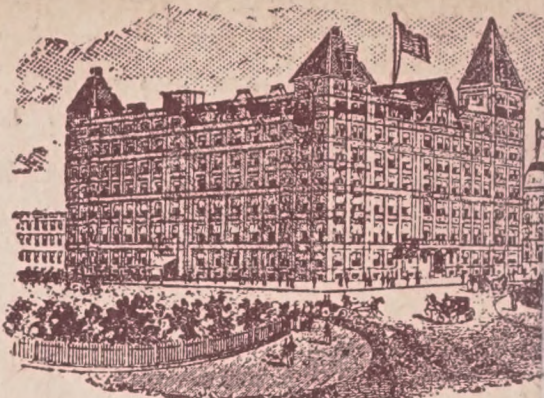
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